

LEARNING MADE EASY



3rd Edition

Home Decorating

for
dummies[®]
A Wiley Brand



Empower yourself to
decorate with confidence

Craft your space for comfort,
function, and style

Master the step-by-step
design process like a pro

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Decorating Lifestyle Coach

Patricia Hart McMillan

Interior Design Consultant



Home Decorating

3rd Edition

**by Katharine Kaye McMillan and
Patricia Hart McMillan**

**for
dummies[®]**
A Wiley Brand

Home Decorating For Dummies®, 3rd Edition

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Introduction

Home decorating has changed a lot since *Home Decorating For Dummies* first debuted in the mid-90s. Updates abounded in the second edition in the early-2000s, with new information on digital solutions, Internet-based shopping, and computer-based help. Now in the roaring '20s, a new wave of social media influencers show how easy it looks to ramp up a room's style. Many new forms of decorating assistance can be found online, sometimes fee-based or as a complement to online shopping.

What you don't see online, on social media, or anywhere else is all the basic know-how that goes into decorating — all in one place. That's where *Home Decorating For Dummies*, 3rd Edition, comes into play: It's a reference to help you design the way you want to live today. With a modern emphasis on authentically living your best life, this new edition of *Home Decorating For Dummies* promises to get you up to speed on decorating with style while staying on budget, on time, and stress-free.

About This Book

This book demystifies decorating — it's like having a pro guiding you step-by-step. Inside these pages, you find the basics on decorating. From space planning to buying furniture to developing your personal style, this book has tons of information. It helps you figure out what you can spend, how to spend it, and how to have the latest and greatest in styles, trends, and technology.

You have one of the best decorating instructors available at your fingertips. Consider *Home Decorating For Dummies* your guide to good decorating decision-making. You find tips, tried-and-true techniques, and helpful hints that will have you decorating like a pro. You won't be breaking the piggy bank to get a million-dollar look, either.

The third edition has some new information about appliances, fixtures, lighting, and designing for the tech-driven lives we lead nowadays. You're more likely to be working or studying from home than ever before. Many people have chosen to telework or launch businesses out of their spare bedrooms or unused dining

rooms. Making these homey spaces work as home offices can be challenging, but with this book you'll find solutions.

Most people need their homes to do more for them as they pursue their passions. Whether its crafting, Bitcoin mining, or running a web-based business, you've got your home working hard for you. You'll find new information, new photographs, and all-new color photos showing the latest decorating trends. You'll also find must-read decorating information and tons of facts you need to get the best results.

Within this book, you may note that some web addresses break across two lines of text. If you're reading this book in print and want to visit one of these web pages, simply key in the web address exactly as it's noted in the text, pretending as though the line break doesn't exist. If you're reading this as an e-book, you've got it easy — just click the web address to be taken directly to the web page.

Foolish Assumptions

In writing this book, we made a few assumptions about you, the reader:

- » **You may be decorating a home for the first time, or you may have lots of experience.** Whether this is your first time out of the gate or you're a seasoned hand, this book has something for you. But you don't need any experience with decorating to get something out of this book.
- » **You may be moving into a new home or wanting to give your current home an update.** Whether you're starting from scratch in a new space or you're just looking to update the home you've lived in for years, you'll find the information you need in these pages.
- » **You're looking for information to make home decorating easier.** We hope you enjoy home decorating as much as we do, but we also assume you have other things you'd like to do with your time, too. This book will help you make the decorating decisions you need to make quickly and easily, so you can get back to living your life, content in the knowledge that your home looks its best!

Icons Used in This Book

As you work your way around this book, you may notice little pictures, called *icons*, in the margins. Icons alert you to important information.



TIP

The Tip icon flags decorating tips from decorators — tips you don't want to miss. With this icon, you find ideas that help you decorate with confidence.



REMEMBER

When you see the Remember icon, sit up and take note — you need to remember this important information.



WARNING

The Warning icon alerts you to any dangers or pitfalls that may blow your decorating scheme or budget.



TECHNICAL
STUFF

The Technical Stuff icon alerts you to technical information, such as the difference between foot-candles and lumens in lighting. You may not need to know these facts, so you can skip these sections if you like.

Beyond This Book

In addition to the book you have in your hands, you can access some helpful extra content online. Check out the free Cheat Sheet for by going to www.dummies.com and entering **Home Decorating For Dummies** in the Search box. You'll find a list of tools every home decorator needs, furniture lingo, formulas for home decorating, and more.

Where to Go from Here

What do you do after you've read *Home Decorating For Dummies*?

Get decorating, of course! You can find endless decorating inspiration in more places (virtual and real world) now than ever before. Many people have even started decorating professionally after reading *Home Decorating For Dummies*. (Some professionals with hit decorating shows have bought copies for their staff to read, too.)

Real people sharing their real decorating is a joy to behold. One of the wonderful advents of our age is that anyone can create content. If you're like us, you love watching reels of people redecorating their spaces. Share your content with the hashtag #HDFD on social media. You'll inspire and be inspired by other readers!

Good luck decorating!

1

Getting Started with Home Decorating

IN THIS PART . . .

Find out what it takes to decorate your own home like a pro.

Set a realistic budget for your home decorating project.

Measure your space and draw a floor plan.

Understand design principles and decorating lingo.

IN THIS CHAPTER

- » Making a plan for your home decorating project
- » Considering color, pattern, and texture
- » Looking at design styles and finding the style that fits your needs
- » Focusing on walls, flooring, ceilings, windows, and lighting
- » Taking your kitchen, bath, home office, or media room to the next level
- » Making your bedroom, living room, dining room, and other spaces shine
- » Putting on the finishing touches of art and accessories

Chapter **1**

Bringing Your Vision to Life

You want to be living your best life. And part of living your best life is having a beautifully decorated house — a house that helps you live the way you want to live. No matter how much space you have to decorate, you've picked up this book because you see yourself living a beautiful life in a (potentially) beautiful home.

This chapter introduces you to the home decorating process, walking you through what's involved from beginning to end. After reading this chapter, you'll have the confidence to start your home decorating process.

Planning like a Pro

Professional decorators live by the adage “If you fail to plan, you plan to fail.” Decorators are nothing if not planners. So, if you want to decorate your home — whether you’re redoing every room in a sprawling house or one room in a small apartment — you need to start with a plan. A happy home happens by design.

To realize your vision, you need a plan and a budget. A plan is a formal document with tasks, timelines, and estimated costs. Budgeting helps you break down a project into smaller steps and manage the money you have to spend. Tracking your time and money goes hand in hand with mapping out a plan. A good plan is clear, easy to understand, comprehensive, and flexible. It should be economical (so you won’t run out of money or run up debt), establish your vision standards, be balanced, and be practical. For more on budgeting, turn to Chapter 2.

Space: the final frontier! Well, at least when it comes to decorating, that is. Right now, your space is uncharted. You need to chart your space for size, doors, windows, and key details. Sketch out or digitally draw your space, including the locations of electrical outlets, cables, light switches, and Internet routers.



TIP

Using templates or online programs or apps can help you figure out the best placement of furniture and facilitate movement through the space. Turn to Chapter 3 for more on mapping out your space.

Every design problem (like “How should I decorate my bedroom to get high-quality sleep?”) has a solution. Maybe you have too many solutions in mind. If so, how will you pick out the best one? The point of thinking like a designer is to be focused on solutions. You need to understand your behaviors, your needs, and your vision. To start thinking like a designer, turn to Chapter 4.

Taking Your Design to the Next Dimension

Whether it’s a piece of furniture or a floor or a knick-knack, every object has three visual surface dimensions: color, pattern, and texture.

Color influences mood, cognition, and behavior. In short, it shapes how you experience a space or an object. You can work with color and color palettes to achieve an effect or solve a visual problem (like an oddly shaped space). Turn to Chapter 5 for the basics of color theory and color schemes.

Pattern adds personality and style. Some styles, like boho, call for heavy layering of strong patterns. How do you layer three, four, or more patterns to get the look

you want? Never fear! It all comes down to dealing with the dimensions and understanding basic decorating rules. Chapter 6 walks you through how to play with patterns to achieve your desired result.

Texture (and playing textures off one another) is a key part of any style. Shaggy wooly animal hides contrasting with slick glass and chrome defines a '70s look, for example. Chapter 7 shows you how to use sensory aspects of texture to craft your room's story and style.

Considering the Style of Your Designs

Whether you're a purist or an innovator, finding out about the long sweep of style history will give you the basics for determining your decor direction.

Historical styles and periods continue strong in today's decorating. Because these looks are so much a part of the way we live today, we consider them timeless and ever evolving in scale and proportion. Chapter 8 outlines some of history's "top hits" for living in style.

Contemporary style encompasses looks from Modern and Mid-Century Modern to present day. Contemporary styles may draw on many influences over time and across the globe. Chapter 9 hits the highlights of the past few decades of interior design.

Many designers have a signature look. You can be like your favorite designers and decorators when you craft your own look. Chapter 10 takes you through the profiles of some of today's leading trendsetters and guides you on how to discover your own personal style.

Sizing up your options for major furniture types has never been easier. Chapter 11 helps you shop for quality and value while staying in your budget.

Getting Background Information

With all the choices out there, you need a guide to help you decide on major decorating choices for backgrounds — walls, floors, ceilings, windows, and lighting.

Walls bound your space. They also provide tons of opportunities for unleashing style and concealing things like wiring and insulation (never pretty to look at).

How can you use paint, wallcoverings, and more to create effects? Discover the options for customizing your look using various materials and options in Chapter 12.

How do you choose the best flooring? Avoid walking on pins and needles when picking flooring. Chapter 13 helps you consider your basic needs for comfort, style, and durability, and provides lots of information on technical aspects of floors.

You may not have given much thought to your ceiling, there are stylish options for making a ceiling look interesting while helping it do its job better (which is to conceal wiring, air conditioning, and structural components). Chapter 14 is a must-read for dealing with the ceiling.

Controlling light, corralling heat loss and gain, and ensuring privacy are key when it comes to dressing up your windows. Chapter 15 looks at the top options for achieving your decorating goals.

Lighting makes or breaks the mood and functioning of a room. What's the right kind of light source? How do you deal with lighting problems like unbalanced sunlight and dark areas? How can you spotlight your favorite objects? Chapter 16 illuminates your options.

Designing Your Kitchen, Bathroom, Home Office, and Media Room

You need decorating know-how to create the four tough rooms: the kitchen, the bathroom, the home office, and the media room. You can add lots of extras to these rooms to make them even more functional and more stylish.

Even if you order takeout five nights a week, your kitchen is the most lived-in room in your house. You use it for everything from cooking to entertaining, which means it has to meet a variety of needs for a variety of users. The hearth of the home truly has very special decorating needs. Turn to Chapter 17 for all things kitchen related.

Just because a room is functional doesn't mean it should be bare-bones basic. The bath — no matter what its size — has morphed into a spa. Whether your bathroom is small or large, turn it into an oasis of comfort with the tips in Chapter 18.

More and more people are working out of our homes these days. Your home office (or library or study) needs professional-level function and style. You need

solutions that work for you when you go to work! Turn to Chapter 19 for practice advice you can put to work.

Screening your favorite shows can be more of an experience than ever before. More and more homes are being built with dedicated media rooms with controlled light, sophisticated sound systems, and special layouts. Chapter 20 takes you through some of the key things to know when decorating for viewing.

Making Your Sleeping, Living, Dining, and Other Spaces Work for You

You spend one-third of your life sleeping. Select your bedroom's look while keeping in mind function, fun, and style. You'll make different design choices if you're decorating bedrooms for children and guests. Chapter 21 has all the information you need to decorate any bedroom.

Your living room is a public room that's also very personal. You want your living room to be a comfortable, relaxing room with maximum style. Chapter 22 shows you how to make your living room picture-perfect yet livable.

Entertaining at home is bigger than ever. Having people over for dining, screening your favorite shows, or playing games is the "in" thing. Some people entertain in the kitchen or the living room. No matter what rooms you entertain your friends in, you want a functional and fun look. Chapter 23 covers dining rooms, whether you have a dedicated formal dining room or you're dining in front of the TV.

Do you have plenty of space? Get more use out of it! Decorate bonus spaces — such as entryways, attics, basements, porches, hallways, balconies, and lofts — in an attractive and functional manner that gives your home a new look. Chapter 24 has the details.

Adding Art and Accessories

Art delights the mind and senses. Chapter 25 shows you how to arrange art on walls, shelves, or wherever you want to display what you love.

Accessories can make or break a room. Chapter 26 offers dozens of ways to add flair with accessories.

TEN TIPS TO HELP YOU DECORATE LIKE A PRO

What's the difference between a beginner and a pro? Being prepared with resources, ideas, and lots of gumption. This list of tips will help you pull off your dreams for a beautiful home:

- **Put together a decorator's bag of tricks.** Literally get yourself a tool carryall loaded with a tape measure, hammer, picture-hanging nails, tape, and other fix-it stuff. This grab-and-go bag of tricks will make decorating less stressful.
- **Be prepared with knowledge.** Research furniture, products, and other purchases before you buy. Read instructions on products before using them.
- **Never consider your place done!** Remain open to change.
- **Get professional decorating help as needed.** Expert help is available — sometimes for free with a purchase or for a nominal fee. Lots of decorating services online can help even the best do-it-yourselfer with expert advice.
- **Keep a list of resources.** Tag painters, tilers, electricians, and handy people in your phone contacts for times when you need a pro's help.
- **Pick a peck of paints to keep on hand.** Touch-up paints for walls, along with spackle to repair, will keep walls looking fresh.
- **Plan the work, work the plan.** Establish stages to keep your decorating projects on time and on budget.
- **Pre-shop for picky people.** Cranky family members with limited attention spans can make shopping a challenge. You may want to pre-shop to pair choices down to two or three options to show them — that way, they won't be overwhelmed.
- **Shop positively.** Do whatever it takes to make shopping a pleasure, whether that means shopping solo or bringing along a supportive friend or partner.
- **Shop virtually.** Busy people can shop online so easily from their devices. Many brick-and-mortar stores have online presences, too. What's great is that no immediate decisions must be made. You have plenty of time to think about what's in the shopping cart before checking out.

- » Setting your priorities
- » Counting and cutting costs
- » Asking the pros for help

Chapter 2

Budgeting Your Projects

First comes the dream, and then reality: the budget. Budgeting involves deciding how much money you can spend and when, where, why, and how you'll spend all your resources (not just money, but also time and talents). A budget can help you make the most (and best) use of all your resources.

In this chapter, we help you set a budget, consider your priorities, get the most for your money, and find free professional help. To plan your work and work your plan, start with your budget!

Coming to Grips with Your Budget

Be honest: How much money can you afford to spend?

The average cost to furnish an entire home hovers around \$16,000 nationally, but you can count on spending more (between \$10,000 to \$25,000) for rooms with electronics, appliances, and big-ticket items.



REMEMBER

If you're hyperventilating, remember this: You don't have to furnish your entire home all at once. And after you've decorated your first home, you can budget less money when decorating your next home, because you'll already have furniture and accessories to work with. You can manage your first decorating budget by prioritizing, spending strategically, and doing some clever shopping.

Simplifying the budgeting process

Budgeting is a two-step process:

1. Figure out how much money you have available.

No matter what experts say is the bare minimum, only *you* can determine what you have to spend. Determine your *total* decorating budget. Be firm, and don't exceed that amount.

2. Decide what you'll spend that money on.

Setting priorities will keep you on track. Do you have a baby on the way? Perhaps setting up a nurse's station is more important than getting new living room furniture. Do you need to set up a home office for your job or to grow your side hustle? Maybe that's more important than redoing your bedroom.

Now you're ready to sit down with paper and pencil (or spreadsheet program and mouse!) and figure out your budget.



REMEMBER

This book deals with decorating, which includes embellishing surfaces and furnishing spaces — basically, working with the room's current structure. Projects with light remodeling — such as changing out wallpapering or flooring or replacing appliances, countertops, and fixtures — also fall within the decorating realm.

Considering basic budget questions

When setting your budget (and your vision), ask yourself these four key questions:



WARNING

» **Do I own or rent my home?** Why spend megabucks improving someone else's property? You can visually improve your rental in ways that make good budgetary sense.

Buy only items that you can take with you when you move. For example, instead of installing wall-to-wall carpeting, buy area rugs; instead of built-in cabinets, buy an armoire. Don't paint walls without checking your lease — painting may not be allowed or you may have to repaint them white before you move out.

» **What is my house worth?** Expect to recover about 80 percent of the cost of new fixtures and appliances, kitchen cabinets, thermal windows, or flooring. Upgrades keep a house in style and good condition and help at resale in a buyer's market.

- » **Will my redo price my house out of the neighborhood?** A general rule is that your house should compare favorably with neighboring ones in style and value. If you're in doubt about what improvements to make, ask your friendly real estate agent about what buyers consider desirable.
- » **Who am I decorating for?** No one can tell you what decorating style, color, or items will make you happy — only you can be the judge. Don't try to please others, except for other family members whose spaces you may be decorating.



REMEMBER

Decorating for resale affects your decisions, especially your color scheme. If you're planning to sell soon, decorate to sell — rely on the “Neutral is nice” maxim!

FINANCING YOUR DREAM DECOR

You got the house! Now, can you afford to decorate it? Here are six of the most common ways to furnish your dream home:

- **Cash:** According to financial experts, cash is always the least expensive way to make a purchase. To maximize your cash on hand, prioritize purchases and formulate your decorating strategy around urgent needs. Take advantage of the fact that you're paying cash by asking for a cash discount. Inquire about discounts on floor models or unboxed/returned merchandise. Negotiate prices with store owners. Take advantage of price matching, coupons, and seasonal sales.
- **Buy now, pay later (BNPL):** Sometimes called a “point-of-sale installment loan,” BNPL lets consumers make installment payments on merchandise. This type of short-term financing is popular for online sales. Platforms such as Affirm (www.affirm.com), Afterpay (www.afterpay.com), Klarna (www.klarna.com), PayPal (www.paypal.com), Sezzle (<https://sezzle.com>), and Zip (<https://zip.co>) offer BNPL plans. Check the fine print on late payments, late fees, credit reporting, and transfer of unpaid accounts to a debt collector. You may also have only a short time to pay off the loan.
- **Furniture/appliance loans:** Appliances, electronics, and furniture can all be financed with these types of loans. What makes these loans attractive is their low interest rates — they're about half the interest rates of credit cards. Application processes are quick and don't necessarily require great credit scores, and monies are released quickly. These loans are serviced with fixed monthly payments so you can't accumulate debt like you can with minimum payment on credit cards. Most lenders offer up to \$5,000.

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- **Credit cards:** Credit cards have higher interest rates than loans, so be sure to calculate how much you'll be paying off in interest over time. If you can get a new credit card during a no-interest promotion, and you have cash flow/savings to pay it off in a specified time, this form of payment may be a good option. Check to see if your credit card offers rewards that can make using them beneficial — if you can pay off the card on time. Be sure to check late fees and understand the consequences to your credit if you fall behind.
- **Layaway:** Stores like retail giant Walmart offer layaway, a payment plan that lets you choose your item, put down a deposit, make payments over time, and get the item when it's all paid off. These plans do not charge interest but may charge a fee. You can also cancel, if needed, and get your money back.
- **Rent to own (RTO):** Some furniture retailers offer flexible “lease ownership” plans ranging from one to two years to pay off the debt. You can find RTO calculators online for the furniture you want to buy. **Warning:** The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) warns against RTO because it can double or triple the cost of furniture (compared to paying with cash, layaway, or installment plans). Be aware of late fees, credit reporting, and having furniture repossessed if you fall behind on payments.

Mapping Your Decorating Plan

Setting goals and ordering your priorities creates a road map to speed your decorating processes. You can organize your projects in two ways.

- » **Breaking down large projects into phases:** Large decorating projects are full of small (and overwhelming) details. Breaking a project into smaller ones reduces stress. You can break a large project into smaller ones in two ways:
 - **Room-by-room:** One way to approach a whole-house project is room-by-room. Because one room seems more manageable than five or more, this approach cuts a monstrous job down to size. The downside is that it's not the fastest way to get your house in livable condition.
 - **Phase-by-phase:** A more efficient technique is to group similar jobs together. For example, phase one might be painting all wall surfaces (walls and ceilings) throughout the house; phase two might be installing ceramic tile flooring where needed throughout the house; phase three might be laying carpeting; phase four, installing draperies; phase five, placing furniture (purchased while the other projects are underway); and phase six, accessorizing.

Which approach is best for you depends on your personal priorities and those of your family.

» **Grouping small projects together:** Grouping small projects into one project or phase of a large decorating job is easy and efficient. Professional decorators save time by shopping for several similar items at one time. For example, look for fabrics to recover a chair in the bedroom, a loveseat in the living room, dining room chairs, a family room sofa, and cushions for the front porch all on the same trip.

If this approach makes sense to you:

- **Make a checklist.** List items and make notes about color (for example, blue for the bedroom) and pattern (toile for the bedroom). Take your list, along with measurements, sketches, or photographs of the furniture, and any other information you may need, on your search for fabrics. From each fabric shop, get *swatches* (small cuttings) and information about prices (write it on the shop's business card and staple that to your cutting).
- **Check potential choices.** Give yourself time to think about your choices and make your decisions. Then make one more trip to the shop(s) to buy. Then you can hand all fabrics and furniture to the upholsterer. Mission accomplished!



TIP

You can shop for lamps and lighting, floorings and floor coverings, and cabinet hardware — items found in the same shop — for a whole room or whole house in this same efficient way. Not only will you save travel time, but you'll probably also find it easier to focus.



REMEMBER

Write down your plan and post it in plain sight where you keep all your home decorating materials and research.

A worksheet can help you record all activities you want to keep track of during a project. To create a worksheet, follow these easy steps:

1. Title your project.

Write the title at the top of the page — for example, “Redecorate the Living Room.”

2. Record your budget.

Under the project title, enter your budget amount.

3. List the work to be done.

In the first column, list all the work that needs to be done (such as buying and laying new carpeting). In the second column, enter the estimated costs of these jobs (based on known retail prices).

4. **Prioritize tasks.**

Arrange the tasks in order of priority, based on logical sequence (painting the walls, carpeting the floor) and affordability (saving up for an expensive item and buying it last). You can create a third column for this ranking.

5. **Review your priorities.**

Have you considered all your priorities before finalizing your decorating plans? For example, you may consider buying a less expensive synthetic instead of costly wool carpeting that will leave too-few funds for finishing your projects.

6. **Set project start/finish dates.**

Make your finish date as realistic as possible. Deadlines are a great incentive!

Hunting for Bargains

Who doesn't love the thrill of the real hunt — the bargain!

Check out flea markets, garage sales, online marketplaces, used furniture stores, and auction houses for cost-cutting bargains. Keep your eyes open for treasures in thrift stores. Watch furniture makeover videos on YouTube to see how easily you can reclaim a trashed piece of furniture, too. You never know where your next treasure is coming from! In these places, be prepared to buy what you find right then and there — and to carry it home with you.



REMEMBER

If you're buying an upholstered piece that needs recovering, know what reupholstering a piece will cost in materials and labor. Only you can decide if your piece is a treasure *and* a bargain.



TIP

Cost-cutting bargain shopping is a creative game that is both profitable and fun to play. For starters, try these tried-and-true techniques:

» **Plan your buying sprees.** Waiting for seasonal sales can save you hundreds, maybe thousands, of dollars. Make a buying calendar with dates of annual sales and dates when you can travel to specialty sources. Ask your favorite stores to add you to their special customer list for preview sale dates.

- » **Find free professional help.** Professionals have a whole bag of cost-cutting tricks, and most are happy to share them. Furniture stores often have a bona fide interior designer on staff whose services come free with your purchase. Home centers (like The Home Depot and Lowe's) have expert kitchen and bath designers who can assist you by putting your room's info into their computer design system and printing out a floor plan and a materials list. Ask the certified specialists at paint, flooring, and lighting stores for expert advice.
- » **Frame art in standard-size frames.** Custom framing and matting can cost an arm and a leg, so save it for truly worthy subjects. Fit everything else into standard frames by using oversize mats or trimming mats to the piece's size.
- » **Get crafty and upcycle.** Faux-paint an old chest that needs a new finish before it makes its debut in your entry hall. Stencil a charming motif on plain kitchen cabinet doors. Paint retailers carry how-to brochures for creating faux finishes. Craft shops stock stenciling kits ready for do-it-yourselfers who didn't descend from Rembrandt. Check out do-it-yourself (DIY) magazines for ideas.
- » **Go minimal on window treatments.** Less is more — and it's less costly, too! Leaving beautiful windows bare can save a bundle. If you really need window treatments, buy stock-size vinyl blinds that cost less than aluminum and custom-made ones. Customize stock curtains with trim. Make your own unlined, shirred, on-the-rod curtains by creating rod pockets in the wide hems of sheets.
- » **Recycle/repurpose.** Take a good look at all your furniture and accessories before buying new items. Consider reusing old furniture by placing it in a different room. A spruced-up old armoire can be put to good use in almost any room, including your laundry.
- » **Shop for interesting, offbeat, inexpensive accessories in unorthodox places.** A friend found handsome hardware for her new kitchen cabinets on a boat. If you're interested in the offbeat, stay alert to the possibilities in boating, farming, and even auto supply stores.
- » **Use one paint color for the walls throughout your house.** Switching paint colors — especially custom colors — and finishes is more costly. Stick to a reliable brand, watch for special sales events, choose stock colors (in some cases, they're less than half the cost of custom colors), and buy small quantities of accent colors to differentiate between spaces. Rely on accessories for added color accents.

Working with Professionals

Savvy designers know how to stretch a too-tight budget, where the local bargains are, and who does what (skilled carpenters, dependable plumbers, gifted upholsterers, and so on). You may save enough working with a professional designer to pay for their services.

Professional designers work with clients in three ways:

- » **Flat rate/fee based:** Per hour, per day, or per project are common. Hourly rates range from \$50 to \$500 and average \$100 to \$200 per hour.
- » **Commissions on purchases:** Designers buy at *wholesale* (usually about half the retail price) from a *to-the-trade* (designers only) source and resell furnishings to you at a markup.
- » **Hybrid of fee/commission:** This cost-plus method combines a fee with a commission on purchase. Fees may also include shopping time. Negotiate billing before the project begins, and get a written, binding contract.

Finding a local decorator

Interior designers, like doctors and architects, most often receive business by word of mouth. You don't have to wait to *hear* about a great designer. You can find one by contacting one of the following professional organizations:

- » **American Society of Interior Designers (ASID):** www.asid.org/find-a-pro
- » **Designer Society of America (DSA):** www.dsasociety.org/interior-designers
- » **Interior Design Society (IDS):** www.theidslist.com/all-ids-designers
- » **The Council For Interior Design Qualification (CIDQ):** www.cidq.org/certified-designer-search-page

If your area has a design center, don't hesitate to inquire about a designer-on-call program and any special sale day open to the public. You can find regional design centers at the Designer Society of America's website (www.dsasociety.org/resources/industry-resources/guide-to-design-centers).

Taking advantage of in-store services

Furniture stores, appliance stores, and home centers offer complementary design services. Billed as “free,” these services are available at no additional fee outside of purchasing a certain dollar amount of products. The designers will develop a concept, a floor plan, and a list of furniture and accessories; then they’ll do a site visit to plan or install the design. Most stores will let you know whether they offer these services when you talk with a sales representative. If you’re planning on buying a significant amount of furniture from the store, you’ll want to consider this extra no-charge service.



TIP

Check online to see if you can get your design consultation started with either a virtual or in-person consultation. You can also see the store’s offerings online.

Surfing for online decorating services

Search the web for “online decorating services,” and you’ll find lots of options. Design packages range in price and scope, from finishing out accessorizing to complete concept. Sites sometimes have pricing from single rooms to multiple rooms.



TIP

Here are some great sites with customized interior design packages to get you started:

- » **Decorilla** (www.decorilla.com): Customized packages start at \$75 and flat-rate packages range from \$549 to \$1,849. Select your plan and your designer, and take a style quiz. Based on your design requirements, you’ll work with your designer to finalize a photorealistic 3D rendering of your room. Decorilla supplies online shopping assistance and discounts of 10 percent to 25 percent at popular sites like Crate & Barrel and Wayfair.
- » **Decorist** (www.decorist.com): Integrated with Pinterest, Decorist offers options to pick your own “rising stars,” “experienced designers,” and “designers with household names.” You pay a flat fee from \$299 to \$1,299 per room for plans and concepts. You can also get design advice for free (for example, “What color should I paint my Farmhouse-style room?”). The site uses affiliate links for shopping.
- » **Havenly** (<https://havenly.com>): This site offers budget-friendly design services priced to be affordable (\$79 to \$129). Pick a designer, take their style quiz, upload some photos, and your designer will generate a design with sources.

- » **roomLift** (<https://roomlift.com>): At the higher end of design services is roomLift. Plans range from an expert consult for \$100 up to \$1,500 for a full plan with lists of sources and discounts. This site creates your floor plan and sends you a box full of swatches, paint chips, wallpaper samples, and cards of each specific item. You'll have to do your own shopping, but on the upside, you'll be getting discounts on great furniture and accessories.
- » **Spacejoy** (www.spacejoy.com): Pricing for Spacejoy's 3D renderings and design concepts start as low as \$99 and go up to \$239 for concepts that include paint color and window treatments. The site allows you to design the space yourself, have a pro do it for you, or collaborate with their design team. You can shop through their site for specified furnishings from Target, Wayfair, West Elm, and more.

Does it include a one-on-one consultation with a designer? Will you get one or two concept drawings with shopping lists and discounts? Some sites offer virtual views (like Pinterest boards). Other sites send wallcovering and fabric samples, paint chips, printouts of floor plans, product images, prices, and other service-related info.

- » Drawing an accurate floor plan
- » Looking over your plan
- » Considering function when arranging furniture
- » Weighing the pros and cons of your floor plan

Chapter 3

Evaluating Your Space

After you've clarified your vision and budgeted your projects, you're ready to evaluate your space. And this task starts with creating an accurate floor plan that allows you to analyze your space's strengths and weaknesses. Based on the insights generated, you can explore design concepts virtually before making any real-life decisions.

In this chapter, you equip yourself with the tools for creating your floor plan. You can experiment with ways to arrange a room using digital tools or old-school techniques (furniture templates). Either way, you'll see how easy it is to test out your decorating concepts.

Preparing a Floor Plan

What can your space do for you? Thinking about the possibilities is an important step. You need to take this step before you begin any decorating, in order to prevent wasting time and money. You don't want to find out that you're a gallon short of paint, or that you ordered the wrong size of an unreturnable carpet.

Drawing a floor plan lets you visualize possibilities and limitations. Floor plans are a concrete way to work with ideas. With today's artificial intelligence (AI) and augmented reality (AR) technologies, visualization and experimentation have never been easier. They enable you to see different options before you pull the decorating trigger.



Take the time to plan. You may need only a few minutes if you use digital tools and apps. Success is always worth the effort. Floor plans let you understand how much of the following you need:

- » Access space for cleaning
- » Breathing space to prevent a sardine-can look
- » Circulation space between chairs and tables
- » Clearance for switches, electrical plugs, air-conditioning/heating
- » Openings for doors, windows, French doors, and sliding doors
- » Optimal placement of different types of furniture and furnishings
- » Surface area measurements for floors, walls, and ceilings
- » Traffic flow through the room
- » Turnaround room for wheelchair access/disability needs



Take your floor plan with you when you shop. Whether your plan is digital or physical, your plan will keep you on track for the perfectly sized and scaled furniture and products you need.

Collecting the right tools

Drawing a floor plan requires the right tools. Old-school techniques still work (drawing engages your right brain creativity, too!). Digital innovations include measuring tools and floor planning apps (see “Putting Furniture in Its Place,” later in this chapter).

Old-school tools

You may already have these tools in your desk drawer. Many you can find online with ease or at a craft store. Gather the following items:

- » **Binder or folder:** Use a binder or folder to hold notes, sketches, and floor plans.
- » **Camera or smartphone:** Take photos of the room from various angles to take with you on shopping expeditions. Bring your camera or smartphone along to take snapshots of pieces you may want to buy. (Be sure to get permission from the shop owner first.)

- » **Clear plastic furniture template:** Use a furniture template for drawing outlines of furnishings or punch-out shapes to stand for your furnishings when you work with your graph-paper floor plan. You can find these templates at home improvement, office supply, and craft stores, as well as online.
- » **Clear plastic straightedge or ruler:** Use a straightedge or rule to draw straight lines.
- » **Cloth measuring tape (at least 60 inches):** Used by seamstresses and tailors for areas that can't be measured as well by a steel measuring tape, a cloth measuring tape is useful when measuring any curved surface, like the top of a chair.
- » **French curve:** This plastic or metal template comprising several large and small curves comes in handy when you want to draw curvy shapes that look freehand.
- » **Graph paper (with ¼-inch markings):** Graph paper comes in handy when you're drawing the plan. Use standard paper (8½ x 11 inches or larger).
- » **Notebook:** Record measurements, ideas, information, and comments. Make plenty of notes — you can't rely on your memory.
- » **Sketch pad:** Use a sketch pad for roughing out ideas or drafting interesting items. Rough pictures are worth a thousand words.
- » **Standard 25-foot retractable steel tape measure:** Pick a sturdy model with a 1-inch-wide blade that stays straight when you're measuring long distances. You'll never need batteries to operate an old-school tape measure.
- » **Writing instruments:** Have on hand pencils, erasers, pens, and markers (in various colors and widths), and chalk. Use chalk (or pieces of painter's tape) to make temporary marks on floors or walls when you're measuring distances longer than your measuring tape.
- » **Three-sided scale ruler:** Calibrated with different scales, this ruler allows you to draw to a larger or smaller scale, if you decide you want a drawing other than the standard "¼ inch equals 1 foot" scale. If the ¼-inch scale suits all your needs, you won't need this ruler.



TIP

Innovative tools and apps

The following more modern tools can also come in handy:

- » **Laser measures:** Pick a device that's accurate, easy to use, easy to see, and efficient in performing basic functions like calculating area, distance, and volume. Most people don't need a laser measure with complex functions like figuring out angles. Expect to pay \$30 to \$40 for a basic device.

- » **Laser levels and stud finders:** If you'll be hanging pictures or shelves, you may want to identify where the studs and wires are behind the walls. An auto-leveling laser level can help you hang pictures or shelves when the time comes. A good combo leveler/stud finder can be found for less than \$40.

If you're a savvy do-it-yourselfer with lots of projects, you may want to go digital. Some newer digital tools and apps are simple to use and free. Others have monthly or yearly subscription fees. Many of these tools and apps are perfect for do-it-yourselfers because they're easy to use. Here are some handy tools for Android and iOS devices:



TIP

- » **AR Ruler App: Tape Measure Cam (Android) and AR Ruler 3d: Tape Measure App (iOS), both by Grymala (www.grymala.by):** Simple to use, these apps let you point the viewfinder and tap the screen to get measuring. The apps offer computer-generated perceptual information that offers measurements in inches, feet, yards, millimeters, centimeters, or meters.
- » **Bubble Level (Android):** Love the old school bubble level devices? If so, Bubble Level offers a virtual version along with straight ruler, 2D ruler, and angle meter.

Although this app is available only for Android, Apple devices come with a level in the Measure app (see later in this list).
- » **Measure (iOS):** Built into recent iOS devices, Apple's Measure app lets you measure horizontal and vertical dimensions. It also has a level-finder built in that makes it handy for hanging pictures.
- » **Moasure (Android, iOS):** Considered one of the best measuring apps, this one features a 1,000-foot tape measure, ruler, protractor (which measures angles), *goniometer* (which measures angles and rotates objects).



REMEMBER

If you're going to use some type of computer-aided design (CAD) software or app, you'll need measurements. Turn to "Moving furniture around" to find out more about these digital design tools.

Measuring your space

Before you start measuring, prep your paper. Professional designers and architects still use these low-tech methods to gather information for programs. Follow these steps:

1. Get out your graph paper and pencil.

You may want to attach your graph paper to a clipboard.

2. Rough out the room's shape on your paper.

You don't need to be accurate measuring the number of squares on this rough draft.

3. Mark openings, such as doors, windows, and fireplaces.

Draw light marks at approximate locations.

4. Note the locations of fireplaces, bookshelves, stairs, columns, pipes, or wiring.

Draw light marks denoting the locations.



REMEMBER

Don't worry about getting it perfect. This is just a rough working drawing to help you capture the measurements.

Now that you have your rough, you'll need to write down the figures as you go. Keep in mind that you'll need overall lengths of walls (the area of the room), as well as the segments between windows, doors, and other features. Follow these steps:

1. Get out your measuring equipment.

If you're old school, use a retractable measuring tape. (You may need a partner to hold down one end to measure long stretches of space.)

If you prefer, use a laser measure. We like laser measures because they give accurate digital readouts, go to about 60 feet, and you don't need a helper.



TIP

If you're buying laser measurement devices, check unbiased reviews from reputable sources. Some newspapers, for example, evaluate the top brands, breaking out performance measures, prices, and ease of use. Some tech-based tools are for professionals and are very expensive — unless you're doing professional work, you won't need a \$2,000 tool!

2. Measure lengths of the walls about 3 feet above the floor.

Start at the entry point and work your way around the room clockwise starting from the left. Measure to the nearest $\frac{1}{4}$ inch. (Many CAD programs only use inches. Check your program's requirements to be sure.) Record the measurements on the corresponding segment of your rough plan. Repeat for each wall.

3. Measure the overall distance between opposite pairs of walls.

4. Measure doorways and entries.

Indicate the direction the door opens with an arc (opening in/out) on your rough sketch. Measure the distances of doors and archways to ends of the walls; note distances on your rough sketch.

5. Measure the windows.

Include the entire window frame from outside edge to outside edge. Record the measurements for any moldings around the window separately. Measure from the floor to the bottom of the window frame. Measure from the ceiling to the top of the window molding. Measure from the window to the next window/opening and to the end of the wall.



TIP

Measuring for window treatments? Go to Chapter 15 for more information.

6. Measure all architectural features, including fireplaces, brackets, shelves, and any other built-in features.

Measure the overall dimensions of these features. Locate each on your rough sketch.



TIP

7. Measure the wall height from floor to ceiling.

Take measurements from several points to ensure accuracy of the wall height.

8. Note the location of electrical outlets, switches, heating and air-conditioning ducts or vents, and other controls.

Document the location of *chases* (coverings for electric wires and plumbing pipes) and exposed pipes.

When you're done measuring, you'll be ready to create an accurate, scaled drawing.

Drawing floor plans

With rough sketch and measurements in hand, you're ready to draw your floor plan to scale.

Graph paper works great for this job. Designate the scale — one square equals 1 foot is a standard scale. The following steps guide you through the drawing process:

1. Note the room's directional orientation.

Note north with N↑.



TIP

Noting which way is north and figuring out orientation is important in decorating. The direction of natural sunlight affects the quantity and quality of natural light (and heat gain) that affects decisions about color (Chapter 5), window treatments (Chapter 15), and lighting (Chapter 16).

2. Place corners with dots, and then draw dots or dashes for key features.

Count the number of squares vertically and horizontally. Put a dot at each corner. Use dots or dashes for openings. Include the room's irregularities, such

as support columns or any other intrusions. Lightly pencil in the room's major areas on your graph paper using a straightedge before firmly committing to hard-to-erase dark lines.

3. Draw the room's specifics.

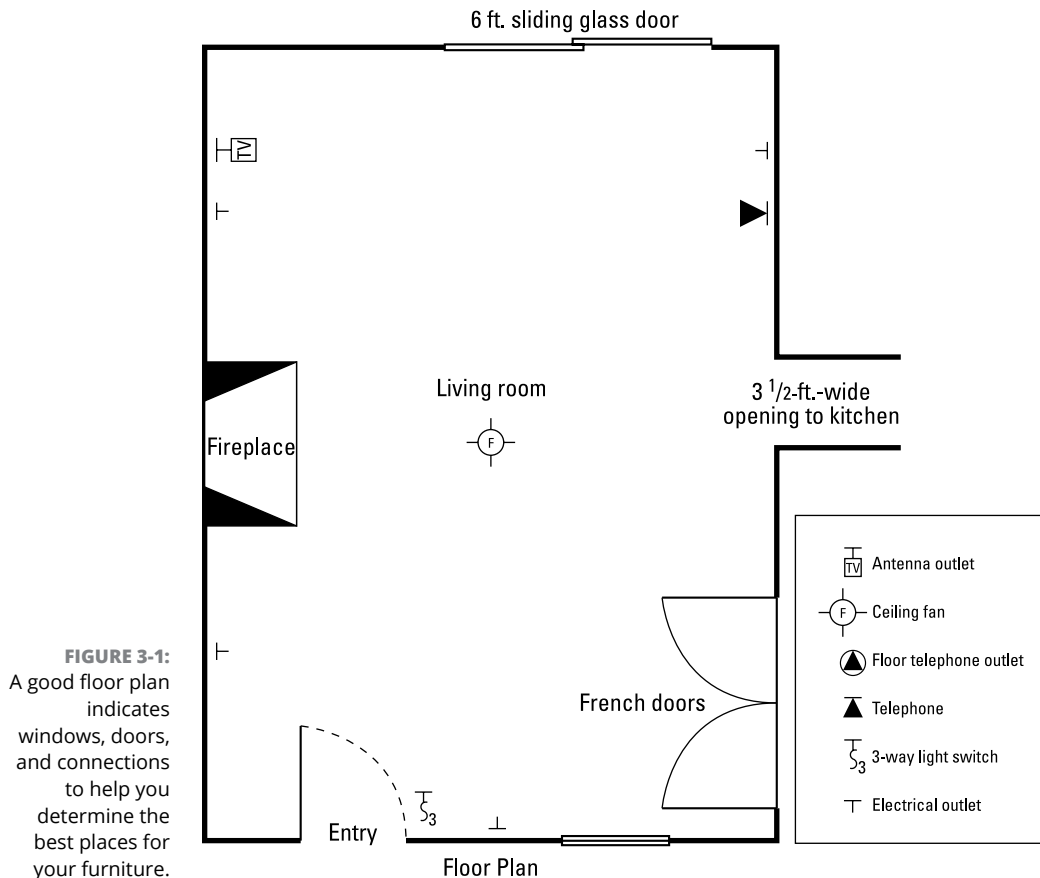
Use a thicker straight line for walls. Show windows, fireplaces, and other features with measurements. Jot down the widths of doors and other openings. (You'll need to know if large furniture can fit through the opening, up the stairs, or around a turn in the hallway.)



TIP

4. Indicate where all permanent switches, outlets, controls, Internet, cable, and phone lines are located.

Figure 3-1 shows how to indicate these elements.



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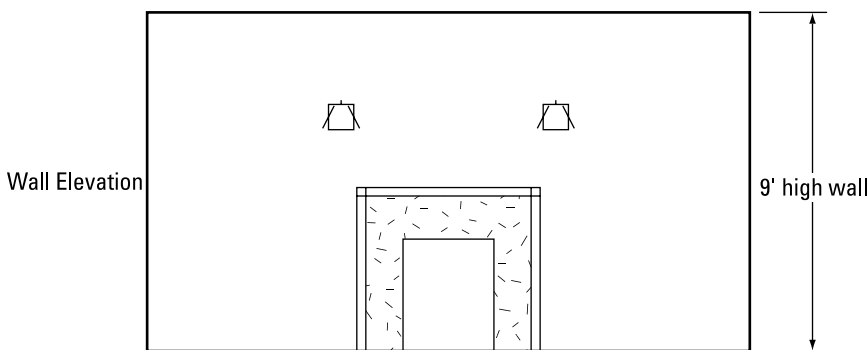
REMEMBER

The location of these necessities will influence furniture placement. Don't make the mistake of putting bookcases or heavy furniture in front of connections you'll need for lighting and equipment.

5. Draw each wall's elevations (see Figure 3-2).

Wall elevations are two-dimensional (2D) representations that help you figure out window treatments and art and accessory arrangements.

FIGURE 3-2:
An elevation helps you place tall furniture, window treatments, and art and accessories.



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Mark all the permanent features, such as light switches, electrical outlets, Internet or cable TV connections, air-conditioning and heating vents, and other modern-age necessities.



TIP

After you draw your plans and each wall's elevations, scan it using a scanner or your smartphone or snap a photo with your smartphone. Print out several working copies if you like to design and sketch. Keep the originals in your file or binder in case you need to make more copies.



TIP

The Photo Measures app (Android, iOS) allows you to take any photograph and annotate measurements on the photo right from your phone. Photo Measures Lite is free. You'll still need to have your measurements handy to annotate the photo.

Finally, figure out the square footage. Multiply the room's length by its width. For example: A 10-x-15-foot room is 150 square feet ($10 \times 15 = 150$) in area. For L-shaped and oddly shaped rooms, break the room into squares or rectangles, get the square footage of each area, and add these together for the total. Note the square footage of the room on your plan. You'll refer to square footage when you purchase floor coverings (see Chapter 13).



TECHNICAL
STUFF

CAD has been around since the mid-1960s, but over the past three decades, CAD has replaced hand sketches and graphing. Open-source, freeware and app-based CAD programs can render your room's measurement into 2D drawings or 3D representations. (For digital options for furniture layout, go to "Moving furniture

around.”) You can find apps for smartphones, tablets, and computers (Windows, macOS, or both).

Thinking about Your Floor Plan

After you have a floor plan in place, you’re reading to start thinking about your space and what you need from it.

Critiquing the space

Evaluating your floor plan helps you decide how to deal with your space. Does your room have features that should be emphasized, downplayed, or corrected? You’ll know more about your space after you answer the following questions. Note ideas and options that occur to you in your decorating journal.

- » **Are the windows located in good places?** Think about type of window treatments you need for views, sunlight, temperature, privacy, and style. (Turn to Chapter 15 for ideas on window treatments.)
- » **Do you like the room’s shape?** Consider any needs for visually correcting poorly proportioned spaces. (Turn to Chapter 5 for shape-shifting color tricks to create an illusion of better proportions.)
- » **Does the room have enough wall space for furniture placement?** Consider ways to deal with this problem, such as using small-footprint furnishings or floating furniture in the room. Note whether you may need professional design help.
- » **Does the room allow easy traffic flow?** Consider furniture arrangements that set up a path to other rooms, especially if there is no obvious hallway or traffic path.
- » **Is the room an ideal size?** Think like a designer (Chapter 4) and use color (Chapter 5), pattern (Chapter 6), texture (Chapter 7), and style (Chapters 8–10) to play up your room’s character.
- » **What are the room’s strong features?** Rooms with a fireplace or interesting feature have existing *focal points*. Focal points can be created with a wall mural or standout piece of furniture (Chapter 4 has tips on focal points).



REMEMBER

Your general analysis is an important step to gain insight. The better you know your room, the better your decorating will be!

Considering function

After you've analyzed your floor plan, you're ready to discover the best furniture layout. Follow the professional's technique by answering the following questions:

- » **What is the primary function of this room?** Watching TV, dining, sleeping — all these activities are clues to the kinds of furniture you'll need and where it should go.
- » **What are the secondary or other functions of this room?** Don't forget the secondary functions your room serves. Does your dining room serve as a home office, too? Listing functions and considering necessary furniture can help you see whether your demands for this space are reasonable and doable.
- » **How many people normally use the space?** The type and amount of seating you need will be based on the number of people who use the room.
- » **What's the maximum number of people who may be using the space?** Holidays or gatherings call for additional seating, such as folding chairs or ottomans that double as seating. Figure out what other kinds of furniture, appliances, and/or equipment you may need for game nights or parties.

Conceptualizing storage needs

Storage is an overlooked and underappreciated function in many houses, even in new construction. To prevent clutter and jammed closets, ask yourself the following questions:

- » **Do you have enough shelves or glass-fronted cabinets to display treasures?** Not every object needs to be hidden out of sight. Some beg to be displayed as accessories.
- » **Do you have storage rooms to deal with the overflow?** Being able to archive out-of-season or rarely used items can be a huge boon. Pantries and food storage are more important than ever.
- » **Are you making the most of your closet space?** Consider putting aside some of your budget to outfit your closets. Efficient clothing storage will save you time getting dressed.
- » **Are there enough wall-hung cabinets to make the most of vertical storage space?** Not every storage solution needs to be a bulky chifforobe.
- » **Do you need storage furniture like armoires to manage stuff?** Every room in your house has special storage needs. Your home office has to handle your work. Your bathroom has to house grooming products and medical supplies.



REMEMBER

Be realistic about how much stuff needs storage. Not only do you have your current stuff, but you'll likely be buying more stuff down the road. To get a grip on your stuff, turn to "Prepping for Change," later in this chapter.

Putting Furniture in Its Place

You've checked your list. You know what pieces of furniture you need to accomplish the functions you've specified. But figuring out where to put furniture for function and beauty can be a difficult job. The good news is, you can play around with different furniture arrangements without having to strain your back.

Moving furniture around

You can arrange your furniture easily — and look at all the different options — by using *furniture templates* (to-scale tracing guides for most popular pieces of furniture) or to-scale cardboard cutout pieces of furniture that you can move around your floor plan. You can find all the most common pieces of furniture in a kit. If you're missing a piece, draw an item to the same scale as your floor plan, using your scale ruler. Workbooks with templates and graph paper are available through online booksellers. Although these books date from the '90s, they still work!

If you prefer, you can use an app or online tool to help you visualize furniture arrangements. Free and low-cost floor planning and design software is available for Windows, macOS, Android, and iOS.



TIP

Check Google Play or the Apple App Store for apps from your favorite retailer. Some retailers have apps that use AR to visualize the furniture in your room. Plus, these apps make ordering the furniture a snap!



TIP

Make two or three possible plans. Weigh the pros and cons of each. To begin, consider these suggestions:

- » **Find the focal point.** Pick out the key architectural feature that serves as your room's focal point. A fireplace fits this starring role, but other possibilities include a picture window, a window wall with a view, or a chandelier. Arrange important seating groups around such focal points. The rest of your room's arrangement will fall into place.
- » **Create a focal point.** If the room has no focal architectural element, make an important piece of furniture stand out. Usually, the wall opposite the main entry into the room becomes the *focal wall* where the focal point is located.

- » **Pick a standout piece of furniture.** A standing screen, a beautiful sofa, upholstered chairs, and art (see Figure 3-3), or perhaps a grand piano are good substitutes. An entertainment center (TV armoire flanked by bookcases) creates a focal point for a family room.



FIGURE 3-3:
A focal point can
be created with
art and a
standing screen.

Illustration by Elizabeth Kurtzman

- » **Arrange bookshelves.** If you don't have any of these pieces of furniture, use a cluster of tall bookshelves. Give them added importance by pulling one or two central units out away from the wall to form a faux breakfront.

- » **Locate traffic paths on your graph.** Use an arrow to indicate an entrance or pathway. If you've lived in your house for a while, you know where these traffic patterns are. Traffic not only must flow through the room (to get from one room to another) but also within the room, so note those pathways if you can.

Don't place furniture in traffic paths. Traffic should flow behind and around a sofa and chairs, but not through a conversation or TV viewing area. Some rooms have problem traffic-flow situations that make conversation areas almost impossible. Some creative thinking can solve these problems. (For some ideas, see Chapter 8.)

Don't block doorways or passages with sofas that seem to push people away. Your room's first message should be welcoming, and a big bulky object blocking the path is hardly a welcome mat.



WARNING



TIP

» **Allow visual space.** Ensure adequate operational space around individual pieces of furniture and furniture groupings by leaving ample space. Here are some recommendations:

- **Floating furniture:** If you're *floating* a large piece of furniture (setting it in the middle of the room), minimum walk-around space is 3 feet — or 4 feet for wheelchairs.
- **Operating furniture:** For opening doors, drawers, cabinets, and shelves, allow 3 feet for kitchens. Allot 2 to 3 feet for living rooms and bedrooms.
- **Providing seating:** For seating areas, comfortable conversation distance calls for at least 2 to at most 10 feet between people. Larger spacing is more formal; smaller spacing is more intimate.
- **Breathing space:** Furniture pieces require breathing space. The larger the piece, the more space it needs. Fabric and materials can add bulk, too. Bigger-looking furniture like a fully upholstered skirted overstuffed sofa needs more breathing space than a same-size sleek sofa with legs.



WARNING

Furniture templates on graph paper look smaller than furniture does in real life. Err on the side of leaving more space rather than less. Fight the temptation to cram in more and more furniture.

Evaluating your plan

After your furniture is in place on a floor plan, ask yourself the following questions to make sure the plan meets your needs:

- » Does this plan meet all my requirements for function?
- » Will the plan be flexible for different situations?
- » Does the plan take advantage of the room's good architectural features?
- » Does the plan correct or disguise bad architectural features?
- » Does this plan have the look of openness (or intimacy) that I'm going for?
- » Will guests feel welcome in this room?
- » Will I enjoy using this room?

If you answer “no” to any of these questions, go back to the drawing board.



REMEMBER

Evaluating your plan is a discovery exercise. You may be amazed at what you discover about your room, your furniture, and yourself as more and more possibilities reveal themselves.

You may want to experiment with at least one alternative to your plan. So go ahead and explore possibilities: Create another plan!

Prepping for Change

Home decorating (and redecorating) is a process. No matter how big or small your household, you'll need to do prep work. Preparation includes decluttering and cleaning.



TIP

Designing is about creating your own personal “machine for living,” a design philosophy from Modernist architect/designer Le Corbusier. Going through this process will get you in touch with your needs for a stylish and soulful machine for living.

Decluttering

Most people have too much stuff — so much so that storage units outnumber McDonald's in the United States three to one. Storage space is costly, and not only may you be hanging on to stuff you don't need, but you may also be hindering your ability to redecorate your space.

If you're looking around your room (and cabinets, closets, and drawers) and seeing too much stuff, it's time to declutter. Along with disorganization, clutter destroys attentional focus, creates emotional and cognitive confusion, and steals your time when you can't find your stuff.

Decluttering starts with your mindset: Jane Stoller (author of *Decluttering For Dummies*, published by Wiley) recommends rejecting *scarcity thinking* (define here). Don't hang on to useless items, store stuff for sentimental reasons, and engage in other hoarding behaviors.

Decluttering and organizing experts have signature approaches to dealing with all the treasures (and trash) that build up in your home. Pros recommend that you triage your stuff into “throw away,” “give away/sell,” or “keep” categories. Have “conversations” with your belongings as you let them go or decide to keep them. This step takes a bit of time but lessens the likelihood that you'll keep things you shouldn't.

Never underestimate the sentimental dimension of your belongings — both good and bad. Don't let sentiment cause you to hang on too long to too much stuff. Letting go can make way for new stuff and a new you.

Don't be intimidated or overwhelmed by decluttering. Don't blame yourself, either, for hanging on to stuff. Here's how to help yourself conquer clutter:

- » **Set goals.** Set "start by" and "finish by" dates. Be realistic about how much time you can set aside to declutter. Just 15 minutes daily can work wonders over time.
- » **Map out your plan.** Order areas (or rooms) for decluttering based on priority.
- » **Devise a strategy.** Write down how you plan to accomplish your goals. Pick up a timer if you're decluttering quickly. Listen to an audiobook if you've blocked out lots of time. Whatever works to keep you focused, do it!
- » **Go tiny.** Prevent yourself from feeling overwhelmed by picking the smallest space possible to start. Tiny steps help build habits, especially if you're crunched for time or new to tidying up. Pick a drawer, a bookcase, a closet. Focus on one small section until you've sorted through and straightened out that one spot. Then congratulate yourself!
- » **Clear out by category.** Another approach is to work across categories. Start with clothing and shoes, books, collectibles, and keep on going, working your way through every category in every room, closet, or drawer in the house.
- » **Make it a marathon.** Block out a swath of uninterrupted time. Pick a high-priority space. Stay focused until you're finished triaging stuff. This approach works if you've got a day to devote to the job. The downside is that you're less likely to build a habit of tidying if you're only doing it when you have a full day or weekend.
- » **Enlist help.** Get your family in on the action of decluttering tough spaces like garages, attics, and storage spaces. This approach works if everyone is onboard or if you can hire help to make it happen. Help yourself build heroic decluttering habits by slating follow-up time-limited tiny sessions in the near future.



TIP

New routines for streamlined living can emerge from your decluttering process. You'll have time to think about how to better organize your daily living. You'll also be more likely to make thoughtful, intentional purchases than you did before.



REMEMBER

Time spent decluttering is an investment in your future state. It will speed your process to living the life you want in your dream home.

Cleaning house

Clean out dust, dirt, and debris before you start decorating. Deep cleaning wipes out dust and dirt that is literally clouding your decorating vision. If you don't

believe dust is clouding your vision, go wipe a baseboard or tabletop with a white cloth. You'll see how much debris builds up if you've gone more than a few weeks without dusting.



TIP

Making a clean sweep will prep you mentally for implementing your decorating plan.

Sweeping, vacuuming, and dusting with high-performance cloths and specialized brushes may be all that's necessary for some tasks. Other tasks may call for your favorite solvents and cleaners.

Here's a checklist of everything to clean:

- »» Air-conditioning vents
- »» Baseboards
- »» Carpets or rugs
- »» Ceilings
- »» Ceiling fans and fan blades
- »» Doors and surrounds
- »» Dryer vents (safety issue)
- »» Fireplace/chimney (safety issue)
- »» Tile floors and grouting
- »» Light switch plates
- »» Lighting, lightbulbs, and lampshades
- »» Walls



TIP

Although you can clean a dryer vent yourself if you know what you're doing, you can also hire professionals to do the job for you. Fireplaces and chimneys should be cleaned by a professional chimney sweep.



REMEMBER

Some cleaning is more like maintenance and prevention. You'll reduce wear and tear on your appliances and equipment while reducing fire risk. You may need to hire a service for major tasks that you don't have the necessary equipment or knowledge to perform.

- » Defining design principles
- » Putting room design components to work
- » Solving common design problems

Chapter 4

Thinking Like a Designer

Decorators work with the same basic elements as all designers: color, form, line, mass, and texture. Decorators are also working with surfaces — walls, floors, and ceilings — while considering how people function in a room.

Although people use the terms *designing* and *decorating* almost interchangeably, they do have different meanings. Designing is about understanding the science of people's behavior to create functional spaces. Decorating is about furnishing a room to achieve a certain look.

Technically you don't have to understand the science of how people use a room, but you do need to understand how to get the look you want. In this chapter, we introduce some basic concepts and approaches to home decorating.

Deciphering Design

What is a design? A design is an orderly arrangement of five elements:

- » **Color:** The perceivable characteristic of light, creator of illusion, maker of mood, and form of energy with cultural, psychological, physiological, and personal implications for design
- » **Form:** The overall shape of any object
- » **Line:** The implied direction or boundary of an object

- » **Mass:** The bulk of an object that occupies space
- » **Texture:** The way an object feels

Consider what you can do with these elements:

- » **You can use these design elements as a design vocabulary, building blocks for a strong decorating foundation.** You can judge all your design choices and determine whether they're good, better, or the best solutions to your design problems.
- » **With this design vocabulary you can clarify what may, in the beginning, be a vague vision.** Thinking and speaking clearly about your design is usually a lot more fun — and much less costly — than muddling through blindly.
- » **You can use the design elements to get back on track.** Thinking your way out of decorating trouble by playing with the elements virtually (using an app or concept board) is less costly than the trial-and-error purchase method.
- » **You can use more of one element and less of another element to create your own signature style.** To create your personal design, you can use many colors and only one texture or many textures and only one color.

Look at a room as though it were an artist's canvas. Maybe a doorway on one side of the wall needs to be balanced with something of equal size and shape (perhaps a tall piece of furniture, a hanging tapestry, or a large rectangular mirror) on the other side. Different-sized windows need to be equalized (you can do this with window treatments). The flooring may seem much richer than the wall material. Perhaps a certain spot in the room needs more or less pattern.

We discuss each design element in detail in the following sections. All artists — whether painters or sculptors, architects or interior decorators — work with these same basic elements to achieve certain effects, all of which must work together to form a unified room.

Considering color

Color is the decorator's magic wand. Color creates a mood and a wide variety of illusions. When you use color to its best advantage, it reinforces your design idea. Color does so much that it deserves — and gets — its own chapter (see Chapter 5)!

Recognizing form

Form refers to the actual shapes in architecture and furniture. Sometimes people say that a room's "bones" are good, which means it has good architectural form.

Furniture form is important and should echo the architecture. For example, tall, straight, slender chairs seem somewhat formal and fit well in elegant surroundings. Short, squat, curvy chairs seem casual and fit in rooms with low ceilings and relaxed, casual moods.

Reading between the lines

All lines create movement and establish mood. Lines include real lines and *implied lines* (the lines that the eye naturally follows between two points, or the lines created by planes and surfaces that come together). Stripes of any thinness or thickness, direction, length, and orientation can also indicate lines. Lines used together create various effects, including focal points and a sense of rhythm, as well as pattern (see Chapter 6).

Lines occur everywhere in design, including in doors, windows, columns, arches, plank paneling, and flooring. Furniture, patterned wall coverings, and textiles all add lines to a room. Too many lines can make a room look very busy. Too few lines (in a room without pattern) leave a room looking a little empty. The following sections let you in on the different kinds of lines and their design messages.

Talking straight about lines

Straight lines are considered strong, masculine, and static. Straight lines may be vertical, horizontal, or diagonal:



TIP

- » **Vertical:** Vertical lines draw the eyes up and down, producing alertness. Vertical lines also suggest stability, dignity, and formality.

A too-vertical (tall, narrow) room is anything but restful. If you're faced with this problem, introduce some horizontal lines in window treatments, furniture, and accessories, creating a neutralizing, stable square.



TIP

- » **Horizontal lines:** Horizontal lines move the eyes from side to side, creating a sense of restfulness. Horizontal lines (which suggest repose) are informal.

A room with too many architecturally horizontal lines may be too relaxing. To wake up your room, add vertical stripes, perhaps in wallpaper, tall furniture, torchiers (standing lamps), striped upholstery on tall-back chairs, and so on.



WARNING

- » **Diagonal lines** promote rapid movement of the eyes and suggest fast movement in general (see Figure 4-1). Use diagonals in entryways or wherever you don't want people to linger. Or tone down the look with a neutral shade.

Used in excess, diagonal lines are downright disturbing! Be very careful to check wallpapers and fabrics — especially flower-and-vine patterns — for implied lines that aren't drawn in and don't make themselves obvious until they're on the wall or at the window!

FIGURE 4-1:
A rich brown
paint tames the
exuberant
diagonal lines on
a focal wall.



Photograph courtesy of Sherwin-Williams

Looking at those curves

Curved lines are natural and feminine. Simple, flowing curves (like those on the front legs of Queen Anne chairs) are gentle. Tighter, more exaggerated wriggly curves are more exciting.

Some furniture designs — Victorian, for example — deliberately create tension by pinching the waist of the chair back and exaggerating the curved top. When might you want to use furniture with exaggerated curves and a sense of tension? Wherever you want lively action — perhaps a hallway, a playroom, a game room, or even a laundry room.

Weighing in on mass

All objects have mass, or bulk, which refers to how much space an object occupies — or seems to occupy — and how much weight an object seems to have. Individual objects — such as an 80-inch-long sofa or a grand piano — have mass. Groupings of objects, such as a love seat and two upholstered chairs, also have mass.



TIP

Often, people perceive an object's mass not by its weight or how much space it actually takes up, but by its appearance. A sofa with exposed legs, for example, seems light and even delicate compared to the same sofa with a skirt. Objects in dark colors take up more visual space and seem heavier than objects of the same size in light colors.

Be sure to balance mass in your room. For example, balance one heavy object on one side of the room with an equally heavy-looking (but not necessarily identical) object (or grouping of objects) on the opposite side of the room.



WARNING

Placing several big, heavy-looking objects together in one end of a room makes that end of the room look as though it's sinking, while the light end seems to fly up, up, and away. Scatter heavy objects around the room for balance.

Touching texture

Texture isn't as visible as color, so people often don't notice texture until they feel it, and then they're surprised. And that's a wonderful way to use texture — as the surface you want yourself and others to enjoy touching, perhaps at first by accident and surprise. Most people appreciate textile surfaces, such as nubby chenille, fine silk, and rough hemp. Many other people enjoy experiencing the smoothness of marble, the roughness of certain stone (see Figure 4-2), and the smoothness or coarseness of various woods.



FIGURE 4-2:
A heroic stone
pattern and
diverse textures
surround a focal
serene seating
area.

Photograph courtesy of Mark Candelaria, AIA (www.candelariadesign.com); photograph by Dino Tonn

Texture, like color, is another powerful mood-maker. It exerts a truly vital force in a neutrally colored room with little or no pattern. (Chapter 7 has more information on working with texture.)

WHAT EVERY DO-IT-YOURSELFER NEEDS TO KNOW

Do-it-yourselfers coach themselves — that's the first bit of do-it-yourself advice you need to know. You coach yourself through the process of learning how to do anything. You cultivate your own personal development. You also develop your personal style. You level up your decorating skills. And finally, you refine your judgment based on your lived experience.

You're the judge of how well you're doing — it's a bit of a trial-and-error process. This book is a great way to support your self-coaching. No one knows you better than you know yourself when it comes to how you want to live.

Here are your five decorating self-coaching tips to keep in mind:

- **Identify your decorating interests.** Figure out what you want to work on and why you want to work on it. You may have lots of reasons you want to be a home decorator, whether you have only one client (yourself!) or many (your whole family) and whether you want to do it as a passion or a profession. (Some readers of the previous editions of this book have actually become professional decorators after reading this book.)
- **Set decorating goals for yourself.** Outline basic steps you need to take to accomplish your dream vision. Be realistic, too. Is it possible to read ten books a week? Probably not, so be realistic with your expectations.
- **Make a development plan for each area of the house.** Draw up a room-by-room plan for each area, decide which areas need the most attention, and finalize your priorities. Decorating is a process that can (and should) go step-by-step.
- **Gather information to educate yourself.** Decorating can be more complex than you thought given technology and the changing ways people live. You may need to know more about sustainability, replacement costs, and maintenance of your interior than you needed to know even five years ago.
- **Hold yourself accountable.** Part of doing it yourself is incorporating some accountability mechanisms. Set some realistic milestones. Track your progress. Learn from your mistakes. Celebrate your decorating success.

Introducing Yourself to Design Components

The five elements in the previous section (color, form, line, mass, and texture) aren't enough to generate a successful design. You also have to consider the following design components:

- » **Focal point:** This is the point of visual reference to which the eye always returns — a home base.
- » **Scale and proportion:** *Scale* refers to overall size, while *proportion* relates the size of parts compared to the whole. Keep these two factors in mind when selecting furniture.
- » **Harmony and unity:** *Harmony* refers to the blending of similar elements, while *unity* refers to the overall sense of belonging together. Harmony and unity are the goal, so keep them in mind as you add each new piece of furniture or accessory.
- » **Contrast:** Contrast places opposites side-by-side, such as black and white or hard and soft. The challenge is to balance contrast to maintain a sense of overall unity. Add contrast in small doses. Be careful not to overdo it. Don't upset a sense of harmony of parts and overall unity.
- » **Variety:** Variety is the spice of life — and the spice of interiors. Include variety within a single room, as well as within a whole-house design.



TIP

Without sufficient and distinct contrast (which can be subtle), a room can look deadily dull. If a room has too *much* contrast or too *much* variety, it can look confused. Your job as the decorator is to come up with a recipe that has just enough — but never too much — of the elements that make for a room that is functional and beautiful.

To make the right changes, you need to have a handle on some more components of design: focal point, scale and proportion, harmony and unity, contrast, and variety. We cover each in the following sections.

Focusing on the focal point

All rooms, like paintings, contain points and lines. A *point* is simply a location. Two points, however, create a beginning and an end, or a *line*. A cluster of points or lines helps to create a strong point of interest called a *focal point*.



TIP

All compositions need a focal point. Think of a focal point as home base, where the eye (which is always traveling about a space) can return for rest. A focal point occurs architecturally with a fireplace, a bay window, or a built-in bookcase. You're fortunate when you have one architectural focal point in a room. If your room has two or more focal points, you need to give one element in the room special status, and all other objects and furnishings should play supporting roles. Don't make secondary areas more interesting by adding stronger colors and patterns that compete with the focal point.



TIP

Fireplaces are natural focal points. Big enough to be architecturally impressive, fireplaces are a source of warmth and comfort. Fires are visually interesting, so they're stars. And with mantels to decorate, they easily steal the show. Drawing seating around the fireplace or media center designates the spot as the star of the room.

But what if you don't have a fireplace in your living room and you're not keen on artificial ones? Picture windows or any large windows are natural focal points. Beautiful moldings and trims make them even more interesting. And if you have a gorgeous view, the window really shines. In a modest-sized room, the sofa with a large painting or mirror above it fits in on the wall opposite the window, balancing the window. Sliding furniture templates around your floor plan will reveal options (see Chapter 3).

If you're left without either a fireplace or a beautiful window, you still have hope. A large piece of furniture, such as an armoire or entertainment center, can fill the bill. A lovely sofa accented with a high stack of pillows and with a large important painting hanging above it, works very nicely as a focal point in any living room.



REMEMBER

There is no right or wrong object to use as a focal point. It may be anything that you want to focus attention on. The choice is up to you. Just be sure that all other furniture and furnishings in a given room help make the focal point stand out.

Keeping size and scale in mind

Size is always relative. People tend to relate everything to the size of their own bodies, and they need a certain amount of space around their bodies for psychological and physical comfort. People also compare the size of objects in a room. These relative size relationships are important. In decoration, absolute size isn't important; relative size is what matters.



REMEMBER

Decorating is about *relationships*. Included with the idea of relative size is *scale*, which is the relationship among objects, humans, and the space they occupy. When furniture scale is too small, an adult may feel like they're in a dollhouse. And when furniture is too large for a room, people seem too large and the room

feels uncomfortably crowded. Does this mean that you can never use a large-scaled piece of furniture in a smallish room? No! Go ahead, if it suits you. The eye is the judge, so you decide.



TIP

Vertical space such as double-heighted or vaulted ceilings allow you to go larger in scale and richer in details and materials than average or low-heighted ceilings. Figure 4-3 shows a kitchen with a bricked ceiling, ornamental surfaces, and multiple focal points in the cooking and storage areas.

FIGURE 4-3:
Mass and beautiful lines make a cabinet the focal point in a kitchen full of attention-getting features.



Photograph courtesy of Mark Candelaria, AIA (www.candelariadesign.com); photograph by Dino Tonn

Creating harmony and unity

Harmony describes how various elements and principles come together to make a total unified look. To use the cooking analogy, when all the ingredients come together, they form an attractive, yummy dish.

If any one general decorating maxim applies, it's "Birds of a feather flock together." Creating a unified design may be your hardest job but keep variety in mind.

Creating contrast

Contrast happens when two or more elements with opposite characteristics are placed together in a setting. One clue that you need some contrast is a feeling of

blah. A dash of contrast can be just the picker-upper your room needs. You can create contrast by pitting two or more objects that differ with respect to one of the elements (such as color, shape, size, material, texture, finish, or style).

How much contrast to use is part of your personal style and design requirements. A small space may need minimal contrast in color to make it seem larger but maximal contrast to keep it from being too cold-looking. A fuzzy rug with smooth leather, a curvy piece of furniture in a room full of straight pieces, or mixing wood and stone or glass and chrome in furniture are ways to add contrast but keep your design message clear.

Adding variety

Variety is the spice of life — and rooms. Add variety with color, texture, pattern, mass, and line. Use them like good medicine — in small doses throughout. Or use them in a strong dose as a heavy accent — such as a heap of big red pillows on a white sofa in an all-white room. Whichever tack you take, keep in mind that contrast of various elements, particularly color and values of color, heightens people's perceptions — but you probably don't want to bowl them over.

LARGER FURNITURE FOR LARGER ROOMS

Welcome to the age of the impressive home — rooms with two-story ceilings. These grand rooms call for grand furniture and accessories. If you find yourself in the wonderful predicament of trying to fill a large room, here are a few ways to scale up:

- Trade in your low-backed sofa for a high-backed (shelter) sofa.
- Make your low-backed sofa look taller by standing a continuous row of extra-large throw pillows along the inside back. Better yet, make sure the pillows have vertical stripes.
- Hang a large, oversize picture above the sofa. Group two rows of several smaller pictures on either side for larger scale and dramatic impact.
- Hang a collection of three or four tapestries (dressy) or quilts (country) in compatible colors and patterns in a two-story entry or stairwell.
- Build your own wall unit by grouping three to five bookcases as one single, massive unit, and top your arrangement with a super-big container of faux or fresh vines.
- Stack smaller chests or trunks atop larger ones to build a pyramid. Patterned or textured chests and trunks trimmed with eye-catching hardware don't need any other decoration (such as a vase) on top.

Troubleshooting Problems

Anyone can walk into a room and say, “I don’t like this.” To fix a problem-laden room, though, you need to step back and figure out what went wrong. A little distance can help you find the solution to make that problem go away.

In this section, you find all the tools you need to rescue your room gone wrong, or one that’s merely languishing in the decorating doldrums. You find a step-by-step process to figure out what’s wrong. You also discover how to solve a room’s problems by applying a few simple rules and guidelines. Finally, three case studies show real-life examples of decorating problems and solutions.

Figuring out your room’s problem

When you walk into a room and you don’t love it, follow these two easy steps:

1. Zero in on the problem.

Ask yourself three main questions:

- Do I like the color of the room?
- Do I like the room’s lines (or patterns)? Does the room have too many lines (making it seem too busy)? Too few (making it seem boring)?
- Do I like the room’s combination of textures? Are there too many? Too few? Are they incompatible or just tasteless?

2. Seek solutions.

Take a close-up look at the area (color, line, or texture) where the problem seems to be. Come up with some decorating ideas to improve this facet of your room’s design.



REMEMBER

Keep in mind some very basic decorating guidelines. You don’t need to consult an encyclopedia of interior decorating; just check out Chapter 4 for planning basics, Chapter 5 for color ideas, Chapter 6 for pattern information, and Chapter 7 for tips on texture.

Apply these guidelines one-by-one — like an automobile mechanic using a checklist. If you check the list and find that one item is okay, move on to the next item, until you find the problem.

Zeroing in on a sound solution

After you've spotted the problem and generated some possible decorating improvements, you're ready to take decorating action by following these easy steps:

1. Choose a solution.

To find a solution to an unsatisfactory color scheme, narrow down your problem. Then apply some simple color rules to solve your problem (see Chapter 5). Ask yourself the following questions:

- Is the room too warm, making you feel overstimulated and unable to relax? If so, apply the "cool colors are calming" rule by adding cool-color accents of blues and greens.
- Is the room so cool that you feel depressed? Apply the "warm colors are stimulating" rule. Cheer up the cold room with accents from the warm side of the color wheel, such as oranges and yellows.
- Is the color bland and boring? Spice it up with complementary colors (colors from the opposite side of the color wheel, such as orange and blue, or green and red).

2. Apply the rule.

Work in steps, gauging your response as you work.

For example, what if your walls are too red and they make you feel hot and jumpy? To simmer it down a bit, cool the room by degrees:

- Switch to a cool-colored, neutral upholstery. Beige, taupe, white, and any dampened-down blue or green should do the trick.
- Add a neutral rug. Soft earth tones, for example, look natural underfoot.
- Hang cool-colored art with white mats for more relief. A leafy landscape or an atmospheric seascape, for example, brings a breath of fresh air into any room. Any too-hot floral can be matted in crisp white or other cool colors for a breezier feel.

Your eye and body can tell you when you've cooled your room down to your comfort level. You'll feel more serene (your pulse rate, blood pressure, and body temperature will drop!) in a room that's balanced.

Considering case studies

Sometimes the best way to solve your own decorating problems is by looking at real-life examples. The following sections let you do just that.

Adding color to a Contemporary home

A longtime client's new Contemporary-style home was impressive. The rooms had gracious lines and a mesmerizing view of the bay. White walls and smooth wooden floors added to the home's Contemporary, art-gallery mood that was meant to be sophisticated and view-oriented. So, what was wrong?

Could the problem be the color — or the lack of it? Ah, yes. All white was too white and competed with the wonderful atmospheric blue of the sea and sky. The room needed a color. But what color? Fortunately, you always have a color cue (and clue!). By looking around, we found ours in the sea and sky. The obvious solution for walls and ceiling was an atmospheric blue — not too light, not too dark, slightly grayed, and just right. The result: a modern masterpiece.

Limiting lines in a Florida condo

We were called in to rescue a party room in a Florida condominium. (It could have been anyone's living room.) The white walls and ceiling should have made it light and airy, right? Wrong! It was a dark, ugly cave crowded with yellowing rattan furniture that created so many crisscrossing lines that we felt dizzy. The sofas and chairs were boring. Lamps were too dressy. Our first reaction: Run! Instead of making a mad dash, we took a deep breath.



TIP

The main problem was line — too much of it. Other problems included bad color, poor furniture arrangement, and dingy upholstery and finishes.

First, we laid out the furniture in a more functional and attractive way. Tables and dining chairs were moved toward the windows to take advantage of pool and garden views. We placed two new, comfortable loveseats and recovered lounge chairs near the bar and TV. Changing the floor plan changed the way the lines of the furnishings worked together (see Chapter 3).

Next, we applied color to visually alter the space. The color cue came from a fairly new blue-green rug. Walls were painted a matching shade of blue-green, and the acoustical tile ceiling was painted the same shade to blend with the walls. Blending the floor, walls, and ceiling with a cool color made them visually recede and created an instant tropical mood.

Painting almost all the trim — ceiling molding, doors, and window frames — a crisp stark white added contrast and lifted the mood. We kept the baseboard molding the same blue-green as the wall, to blend wall and floor. (A white baseboard would've broken the flow.) We added crisp white, slim-line window blinds in a country wood texture in order to dress up windows and control sunlight.

To add glam and glitz (and make the room seem more spacious), the wall in the dance floor area was mirrored. Freestanding support columns — big visual barricades — were mirrored to make them magically vanish. (Mirrors are among magicians' and decorators' best tricks!)

To tone down the dizzy lines of the dingy rattan furniture, it was painted the same blue-green color as the walls. Lounge chairs were recovered in a vibrant red and green tropical bark cloth fabric that coordinated with two striped loveseats. The finishing accents were two paintings and a big bouquet of silk tropical flowers. The result: a tranquil tropical paradise.

Adding textural contrast throughout a home

Texture is like the Broadway understudy — present, prepared, seldom needed, but occasionally called on to play a starring role. A longtime friend and client's Boca Raton home was a study in what is referred to by locals as "Boca beige." Joan, an artist, had worked hard to furnish her home. She gave serious thought to the selection of every item. She should've been happy with the results, but when she entered her home, her heart didn't beat faster. What was missing? Joan took a truly critical look at her living room — just as though it were a canvas. Using our suggestions, she examined the room's color, line, and texture.

As Joan studied her room, she was happy with the colors and lines. But she realized, to her amazement, that all surfaces were equally smooth and matte. The Oriental rug, painted walls, velvet and soft brocade fabrics, and even the painted ceramic accessories were all smooth — too smooth! The room had no textural contrast.

Introducing a variety of textures was as easy as bringing in accessories: a small collection of shiny brass candlesticks for the mantel, baskets beautifully woven in a variety of smooth and rough grasses to hold magazines and mail, a clutch of small mirrors in a variety of carved and gilded frames to hang over a small chest, and a bouquet of flowers made of sparkling crystal in a richly carved wooden vase. The result: a sophisticated Contemporary environment.



REMEMBER

Adding texture is a remedy you can easily and inexpensively apply — and one that brings its very own, very special decorating pleasure.

2

Creating Dimensions

IN THIS PART . . .

Create mood, alter perceptions of shape, and change proportions with color.

Establish visual variety, pull together different solid areas, and add spice with pattern.

Add character, change how people feel in a room, and build a sense of depth with texture.

- » Understanding color theory
- » Using the color wheel
- » Creating a color scheme that works for you

Chapter 5

Experiencing Color

Color works magic! You can use the color magic wand to morph mere mortals' perception of space. Make small spaces seem large, large spaces feel small, and imperfect rooms seem perfect. Beguile people into feeling toasty by using warm colors. Trick people into feeling cool on a summer day by using cool colors. Calm down restless spirits, speed up productivity, and strike the right balance — all by using the proper color.

In this chapter, you discover the principles behind the color wheel and use those principles to create a foolproof color scheme with confidence. To become a color magician, read on!

Introducing Color Theory and Practice

Color theory describes and explains colors (and how they relate to each other) by providing a structured set of definitions, concepts, and design applications. One classic way to conceptualize color theory starts with the color wheel, a rainbow of refracted white light bent into a circle. (Go to “Using the Color Wheel,” later in this chapter, to find out simple tricks to create color schemes.)



TIP

When working with colors, think in terms of *color relationship*. Colors become more or less powerful when used together. Equally intense hues compete for attention, causing too much tension, and ultimately canceling each other out. So, select a lighter value of one color to contrast with the deeper value of another.

White contrasts with almost any color to create an easy and dramatic two-color scheme. Although white is technically not a color (like black and gray, it's considered *achromatic*, without *chroma*, or color), treat it as a color. If you have white doors and moldings in a room, repeat the white somewhere in your scheme. Pops of white in upholstery patterns, wall coverings, and window treatments and accessories create a design story.



TIP

Exploring color has never been easier with online tools and apps. Paint companies like Behr (<https://colordiscovery.behr.com>), Benjamin Moore (look for the Benjamin Moore Color Portfolio app for both iPhone and Android), Sherwin Williams (www.sherwin-williams.com/visualizer), and more are good places to start.

Relating to color

Your ultimate decorating goal is to create a color scheme. Color schemes can be simple (just one color or variations of a color) or complex (five or more colors used in varying proportions). Follow these steps:

1. Understand your experience of color.

Start by figuring out what colors you would like to experience in your space. Use an app to help you visualize it, or hang large paint samples (called *chips*), available at your local paint store, on the wall. Hang up colors that appeal to you — warm, cool, bright, pale, dark, light.

How do you *feel* about each color? Some colors will rev you up. Some will calm you down. What do you *think* about each color? You may like one color, but your brain tells you it won't look great with your floor. Eliminate all but the few that you really like — the ones that make you feel happy (or calm or energetic or whatever mood you're going for).

2. Consider the effects of color on your space.

Colors can be categorized as *warm* (red undertone) or *cool* (blue undertone). These two types of colors have different visual effects.

Warm colors (reds, oranges, yellows) seem to advance toward the viewer. They create a cozy effect and make people feel warm physically. They can also activate and energize people while promoting social interaction.

Cool colors (blues and greens) seem to *recede* away from the viewer. Cool colors create an atmospheric effect (making space seem larger). They make people feel cool physically, often by several degrees. They can also calm and revitalize, while promoting creativity and productivity at work.

3. Figure out what effects your space needs.

For each room, ask yourself what you want the room to feel like. Bold and dramatic? Functional? Inspirational or spiritual? Inviting? Relaxing? Trendy and stylish? Versatile and creative?



TIP

Decorating to sell your home? Ask your real estate agent for guidance about what sells in your market and search the web for data-driven advice from experts. According to surveys of real estate agents and new buyers, certain trendy colors can lower offers by thousands of dollars compared to safer neutrals like soft beiges and grays.

4. **Consider color in context.**

What effects do colors have on each other? Ideally, colors enhance each other. A too-rowdy red will be toned down by a sedate beige. A cool neutral gray will seem lively when paired with a tropical pink.

Home decorators can draw color inspiration by looking at sunsets, landscapes, and seascapes — in real life or in photographs. Nature is a good color scheme teacher, so educate your eye. (Some apps can translate the colors into paints, too!)

5. **Make it flow.**

Consider how a room's color scheme will relate to another space's color scheme. Here are some questions to ask yourself:

- Should the adjoining rooms (or spaces) have different color schemes?
- Should you vary the color scheme by using different proportions in the adjoining rooms?
- Should you use complimentary colors to send a message on how to use the space?

Adjoining rooms (or spaces in open plans) will need color coordination. Rooms that work together (kitchens and dining rooms, for example) need to relate to each other while maintaining their separate identities.

Think about how rooms flow into hallways so color flows from one space to the other. Hallways painted or covered in cool colors (like greens) seem to help people move through the space more quickly and seem less claustrophobic than warm colors (like pinks).



REMEMBER

Color scheming is about choosing colors that are likeable and livable. It involves both the heart and the mind!

Finding foolproof color schemes

Two easy color schemes work well for small to medium-size homes. Go for a space-enlarging sense of unity by using either of these schemes:

- » **Unified scheme:** Use the same background color throughout to create a sense of continuity. It will make the house seem larger than using different wall colors in different rooms. Introduce variety by using several tints (lighter) and tones (deeper) for background and furnishings, and by mixing interesting textures. You can also switch accent colors from room to room.
- » **Positive/negative scheme:** Use two colors (like black and white) but in radically different proportions from room to room. The first room could use a light background and dark accent color; the second room could use a dark background and light accent. You use the same colors to achieve continuity but in different amounts for variety. You can achieve a dramatic effect.

Some color combinations seem downright wrong — even ugly. When one color detracts from another, the scheme doesn't work. Paint manufacturers eliminate this problem by arranging colors *sympathetically* (in close relationships that are mutually enhancing). They also produce color schemes of coordinating colors.



TIP

You can buy *paint decks* (books of paint chips) in paint stores for a nominal price, usually \$15 or so. Professional designers often get them for free.

By choosing related colors vertically on the same page or horizontally as you fan out the deck, you're guaranteed colors that get along well together. You can avoid one of our pet peeves (and felony arrest for bad decorating): using pink-based with yellow-based beiges in the same room. If you're not sure what pigments are in the paint, ask the salesperson.



WARNING

If it's serenity you want, don't use lots of color schemes throughout the house, no matter what its size. This is especially true if your house has an open layout.

Spinning the Color Wheel

A *color wheel* is a visual representation of colors, with hues arranged according to wavelength of light. Think of how light is refracted by a prism or how a rainbow is formed.

The color wheel has *primary colors* (red, yellow, and blue) evenly spaced between *secondary colors* (orange, green, and violet). Mixing *analogous* (adjacent) colors creates *tertiary* (third) and *quaternary* (fourth) colors that usually go by exotic names.

The color wheel displays the relationship between colors and shows how to represent color relationships geometrically. The color wheel makes seeing color relationships easier. Colors have relationships to each other. They're next to, across from, and at angles to each other. Designers talk about color schemes in terms of where colors are in these relationships:

- » **Analogous colors:** Colors next to each other are *analogous* (alike). A good example of analogous primary colors is red and yellow. Mixing these two colors creates more analogous colors. Because they're so closely related, they always work well together.
- » **Complementary colors:** Colors placed opposite each other are *complementary*. Red and green are a good example. Every color has a complement. Don't use equal amounts of complementary colors in your color scheme because it produces an unpleasant tension. Instead, use a larger amount of one color when using complementary colors.

Colors are either warm or cool. It's the most basic color rule. Warm colors are reds and yellows. Cool colors are greens and blues. Draw a line down the middle of the wheel; warm and cool colors will be on opposite sides. Every warm color has a cool complement.

Warm colors are relaxing, friendly (sometimes even sexy), and associated with easygoing informality and intimacy. These colors seem to advance toward the viewer. Warm colors speed up heart rates and create excitement. Mild warm colors stimulate; intense warm colors motivate — notice that fast-food places use orange to get you in and out in a hurry!

Cool colors are more refreshing and emotionally distant, and they're associated with formality and reserved behavior. They seem to recede away from the viewer, so walls seem farther away than they actually are. Cool colors slow down heart rates and relieve mental tension. Mild cool colors soothe; intense ones sedate — lots of medical facilities use green to balance their patients' tension.

You can use warm and cool colors to fix problems. Want to cool down a too-warm room? Use colors from the cool side of the color wheel. Want to warm up a space that seems chilly? Use a color from the warm side of the color wheel. Want room temperature not to be a factor? Choose a neutral color.

Making Color Work for Your Decor



TIP

Use your color wheel to find the perfect color scheme. Here are some of the most popular and enduring schemes:



WARNING

- » **One-color neutral:** *Monochromatic* (one-color) schemes come in two varieties — you can use a single color, or tonal variations of one color. Common schemes are based on white or beige, which can be very chic and quite contemporary. Just make sure that all your whites and beiges are either cool or warm. Use texture and pattern (subtle ones, such as woven textiles, work well) to add interest.
- White tends to announce flaws loudly. Architectural imperfections (not to mention dirt and stains) may seem exaggerated. Hide flawed walls with a deeper value of beige.
- » **Two colors:** The *complementary color scheme* contrasts colors that lie on opposite sides of the color wheel. Use proportionately more of one color to prevent too much tension. Use soft versions in neutralized shades, such as tan and slate.
- » **Three-of-a-kind:** The *analogous color scheme* uses three colors that lie close to each other on the color wheel. A typical scheme features one primary color plus two supporting colors (secondary or tertiary colors that lie on either side of the main color). For example, you can try red with a red-violet and a red-orange.
- » **Three-of-almost-a-kind:** The *split-complementary color scheme* harmonizes one main color with two colors that are adjacent to the complementary color (but not the direct complement itself). On the color wheel, draw an imaginary line from one main color to its complement. Select a color that is one space to the right of the complement, and then move one space to the left of the complement to find the second color.
- » **Three-part harmony:** The *triad color scheme* uses three colors the same distance apart on the wheel. Start with your main color and draw imaginary lines to colors that are equally spaced from the complement to form a triangle. Red, yellow, and blue is one example; another example is orange, green, and violet.
- » **Four-part harmony:** The *tetrad color scheme* ups the ante by featuring four equally spaced colors. Many Traditional color schemes are neutralized shades. These schemes are tricky to pull off, so base your own scheme on a fabric swatch or wallpaper swatch. Using coordinated upholstery and patterned fabrics makes the effort easier.

Spreading color around

The 60-30-10 rule is a traditional scheme that creates a balanced look by strategically allotting colors to primary, secondary, and tertiary areas, as shown in Figure 5-1:

- » **Primary (60 percent):** The main color goes on floors, walls, and ceilings. Large furniture or rugs receive a neutralized color.

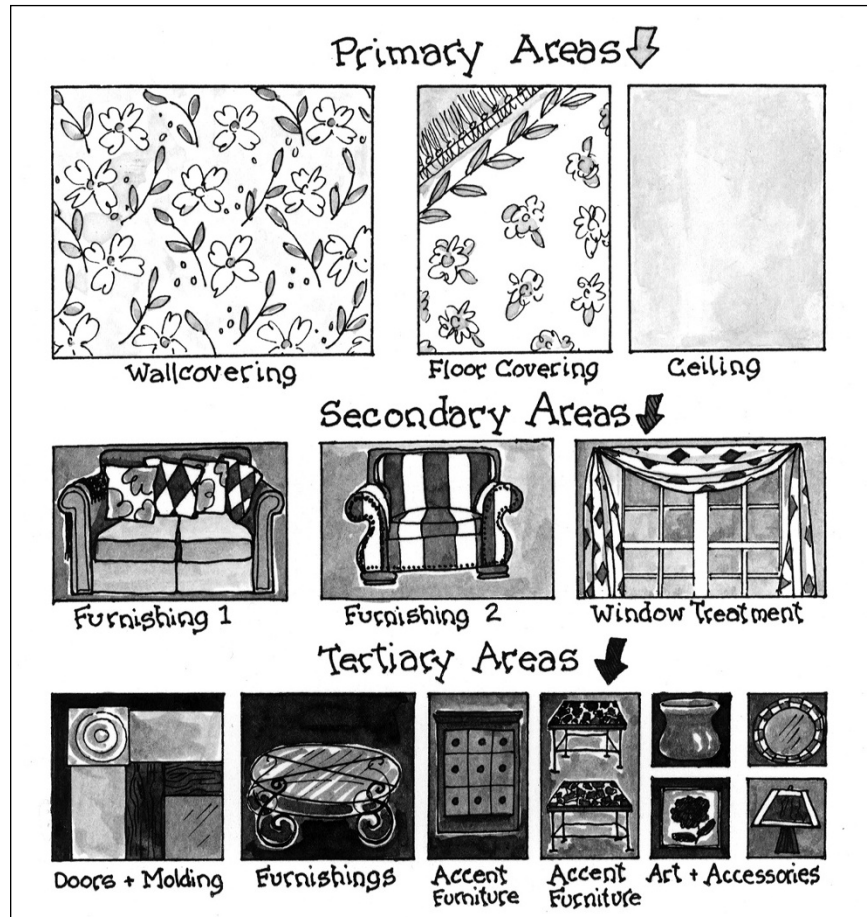


FIGURE 5-1: A room's primary, secondary, and tertiary areas receive different distributions of color values (light, medium, and dark).

Illustration by Elizabeth Kurtzman

- » **Secondary (30 percent):** Accent walls and accent furniture receive a secondary color that supports the main color. This secondary color should be distinct from the primary color. The secondary areas — such as area rugs, window treatments, and furnishings — should receive more color intensity than the

primary ones. Use more color, pattern, and texture on these areas. (For hints on how to use pattern and texture, see Chapters 6 and 7, respectively.)

- » **Tertiary (10 percent):** This area can take strong accent colors because it's a small part of the room. Use brilliant or dramatic color in art; accessories such as pillows, throws, lamps, and vases; and other decorative and small functional objects. This accent color can be vivid or dramatic or even black. Look at artwork or pillows or prints to get a handle on a strong color that will work. Distribute the colors so that the room has a rhythm. (See Chapter 4 for tips on creating rhythm).

In Traditional style, use the landscape rule: Make the floor the darkest surface (like the ground), the walls and focal walls medium (like trees), and the ceiling the lightest value (like the sky). These color values look the most natural because that's the way Mother Nature spreads color.

In Contemporary styles, use the flip technique: Flip the traditional rule on its timeless head with light floors and dark ceilings.



TIP

What's the best (and easiest) way to spread color around your room? The chromatic intensity rule says that as areas shrink in size, *chromatic intensity* (the strength of the color) grows. Cover the largest areas in the lightest color value and dose smaller areas with *saturated* (brighter, bolder, or stronger) color values.

Meeting with the style board

To craft your color scheme, collect fabrics swatches, colors chips, and inspiring photographs. Arrange them on a *style board*, a large sheet of white paper or poster board. Professional designers use these to show clients how the room may look.

Images from brochures, catalogs, and magazine are helpful, but when you can, collect real materials for your style board. Retailers offer several options:

- » Some samples (lamine countertops, paint, carpeting, fabric swatches) are free for the asking. Others you may have to purchase.
- » Some retailers allow you to check out samples as long as you return them. Some request a deposit that retailers credit to your account when you return the sample or make a purchase.
- » The larger the sample, the better. Big samples give you a truer idea of how a color will look when it's covering an expanse of wall, floor, or furniture.

If you use poster board for your style board, attach your photos, swatches, and samples so they can be easily removed. Then you can reuse your boards.

MAKING COLOR CORRECTIONS

Create color magic with these seven tried-and-true tricks worthy of Houdini:

- **Scale up the look of a smallish room.** Choose a light, cool atmospheric color overall. Keep color contrast low. Go with the same color on walls, ceilings, and floors. Match upholstery and furnishing to the floor. Add interest by using contrasting textures.
- **Cozy up a medium-sized room.** Use medium-toned, warm neutrals. Crank up the room's character with decorative wall features like focal walls and *wainscoting* (wood paneling that comes about halfway up the wall). Bring in contrasting colors in the molding.
- **Widen out a skinny room.** Square off a too long, rectangular room by playing with receding and advancing colors. Fade out long walls with light, cool colors to make them recede. Make short walls seem to advance by using a warm color.
- **Narrow a wide room.** Use deep, warm neutrals on long walls to make them advance. Pick lighter, cool tints on shorter walls to make them recede.
- **Heighten the look of low ceiling.** Go with a white ceiling or a lighter tint of wall color. Keep floors and walls light.
- **Cancel out an unsightly ceiling.** Select a black, dark gray, midnight blue, or chocolate brown.
- **Call out ceiling heights.** Play with different colors in spaces with varying ceiling heights. Hallway-type spaces with lower-level ceilings may look best if the ceilings are painted the same color as the walls. Areas where people are meant to linger may have a raised ceiling and would benefit from a visual height-adding white or a light contrasting color (pale blue with yellow walls, for example).



TIP

Evaluate your completed plan under the same lighting conditions that you'll be using in your decorated room. (For tips on lighting, see Chapter 16.) What you see will be what you get — your finished room should look as first class as (and probably even better than) your style boards.

Choosing a stylish color scheme

Selecting a color scheme can seem like a difficult test of your decorating ability. An easy way out is to choose a decorating style that comes with a particular color, distinct color palette, or strongly suggested color direction. Here are some examples:

- » **City Chic:** Think neutral colors — black, white, and beige — in luxurious, high-quality textures. Polished chrome, steel, and woods with plenty of sheen

and shine add to the glamour. Because colors are muted in this sophisticated, tailored style, texture is supreme; textiles have woven (not printed) patterns.

- » **Coastal Life:** Blue and white seems so right. This Greek Islands approach adds healthy doses of summer-sky blue to a mostly pure-white background. Adding rustic wooden accents, textured textiles, and glazed and decorated pottery makes this look even warmer.
- » **Country Cottage:** Ruffles and flourishes in the form of *dressmaker details* (pleats, ribbons, welting, and other trim) distinguish this feminine and pretty look. Colors run the gamut of pastels, both warm and cool. Floral patterns abound, smaller scaled and less imposing than the English Country House look that's a rich kissing cousin.
- » **Country French:** Earthy textures and bright calico patterns found in the fabrics make this look enduringly popular. Colors are strong: mustard, rusty red, indigo, and grass green. Fabrics stand up well against white plaster walls. The same patterns in wall coverings make definite style statements for walls.
- » **English Manor:** Floral bouquets abound in this classic Traditional style based on English country homes. The jewel-tone colors in brilliant reds, yellows, blues, greens, purples, and oranges are found in the chintz floral bouquet fabric used for draperies, upholstery, and to-the-floor tablecloths.
- » **Lodge Look:** The American West version of this style gets its color direction from Native American Indian rugs — strong reds, blues, and earth tones. Use rugs on the floor or, in a Contemporary way, as upholstery. Western art also provides color direction. The East Coast Adirondack fishing-camp version uses lots of twig furniture, braided rugs, and typical New England autumn harvest colors in golds, reds, and strong but softened greens. (Don't forget the birch-bark canoe!)
- » **Shabby Chic:** This look is back in style. This faded-glory style paints everything within sight white — antiqued and softened to ivory or linen white — which resonates strongly with lovers of genteel furnishings that appear to have seen better days. Your paint job doesn't have to be high quality; the more chips, nicks, and dents the better — that's terrific texture! If your scheme seems color-starved, add discreet accents.
- » **Sun Country:** This Contemporary Country style brings American Country up-to-date, using clear, light, bright, spring and summer colors. No deep pumpkins and russets here. Look to the flowers of spring and summer for a color palette. Simple linens and cottons in solid colors underscore the joyful serenity found in this country-house style.
- » **Villa Style:** Think Old World Tuscany made famous by its earthy, well-weathered, gold- and rust-colored stone or plaster walls. These are earth tones with panache! Dark, rich, and rustic woods augment this solid, Mother Earth look with its wrought-iron accents and beautifully woven tapestries.

- » Thinking about pattern options
- » Finding a place for pattern in your home
- » Working toward pattern-perfect looks

Chapter 6

Playing with Pattern

Pattern (the repetition of line, form, and color) adds interest to a room. Pattern can be as simple as straight lines or as complex as paisley prints.

In this chapter, you discover the basics of pattern, find out how to masterfully mix and match patterns, and practice using patterns before you go all out and decorate a room. This chapter gives you everything you need to know to use patterns with confidence, so you can make child's play of pattern play!

Considering Pattern

Pattern is everywhere! When interior decorators talk about pattern, they're referring to pattern in textiles, wall coverings, and rugs (see Figure 6-1). Pattern is plentiful, often inexpensive (think of cotton gingham checks), attention getting, and, like color, always has a job to do. Pattern in these materials adds its own special effects to a room by

- » Creating instant impact (giving the eye something intriguing to view)
- » Mediating between two solid surfaces (often described as "getting it together")
- » Establishing a particular historic style or a special mood (for example, romantic, elegant, or playful)
- » Determining the focal point

FIGURE 6-1:
A classic Greek
key in the rug
works with
Contemporary
furniture
designed by
John Lyle.



Photograph courtesy of John Lyle (www.johnlyledesign.com); photograph by Andrew Welch

Timeless patterns

Historic patterns aren't mere relics of the past; they're timeless. They often reappear in fresh, new *colorways* (combinations of colors) and with new color coordinates. New colors (see Chapter 5) and scales affect historic patterns, making them more or less formal and younger, more contemporary, and right for today (see Chapter 8 for more on timeless styles). Here are some perennial favorite patterns that never go out of style:

- » **Calico:** This cotton fabric is printed with small, brightly colored floral patterns. Cheerful and modest, calico creates a cozy feeling that is a big part of Country-style decorating. This pattern also shows up in china.
- » **Chintz:** This cotton fabric features generously scaled floral arrangements and comes in many colors. It's typically found in traditional English styles. *Glazing* (a shiny coating) gives it extra pizzazz. So do the ribbon-and-flowers patterns that the French add and broad stripes that seem so typical of English homes. (Chintz's floral patterns also appear on rugs.)
- » **Flame stitch:** A pattern that looks like flickering flames, flame stitch is multicolored and, when woven, very textural. You often notice flame stitch with 18th-century furniture. Somewhat masculine in character, it's at home in Traditional settings but looks great as an accent in a Contemporary room as well.

- » **Gingham:** This pattern consists of two-color checks (blue and white, red and white, yellow and white), usually in a woven cotton fabric. Traditionally, it epitomizes humble Country styles, but a silk gingham — especially in large checks — acquires an elegance that's at home in a mansion.
- » **Herringbone:** The diagonal ridge that reverses direction periodically in this weave creates a vertical stripe effect. Some people think it looks like a fish skeleton, which is how it earned its name. Herringbone, tailored and masculine in character, is a favorite upholstery pattern. It's seen in vinyl wall coverings and is often used in commercial interiors.
- » **Stripes:** *Stripes* (repeated vertical lines) come in many different varieties, including the following:
 - **Awning stripes:** Big, broad, monochromatic stripes used for awnings, found in upholstery and wall coverings.
 - **Rep (or irregular) stripes:** Alternating narrow and wide stripes, often in woven silk fabrics, a favorite for upholstering Traditional-style chairs.
 - **Roman stripes:** Stripes in alternating bright colors and sometimes of varying widths, found in silk and synthetic fabrics for curtains and upholstery, especially in Traditional-style rooms.
 - **Satin stripes:** Alternating *matte* (dull) and *satin* (shiny) stripes in silk and silklike synthetic fabrics (and wall coverings), appropriate for Traditional or dressy rooms.
 - **Ticking stripes:** Narrow, monochromatic stripes, most often in cotton fabrics used on pillows, but also a favorite slipcover fabric for all kinds of Country-style rooms, from cottage to Sun Country style.
- » **Toile de Jouy:** This line drawing of a pastoral scene in a single color appears on plain-woven cotton fabric. Designers strongly identify but do not limit toile de Jouy with French furnishings. You can use it in every room in any house.
- » **Tree of life:** An ancient Oriental rendering of a sprawling tree, you frequently see this pattern with other plants and animals. Usually large in size, you often notice the tree of life in 18th-century printed fabrics and wall coverings. It also seems very much at home in formal and dressy living rooms, dining rooms, and bedrooms.
- » **Trellis:** Garden *trellises* (narrow strips of wood lath joined either in a square or diamond pattern) are the basis of patterns often repeated on fabrics, wall coverings, and area rugs — with and without accompanying flowers and vines. They add a sense of spatial depth, which provides a three-dimensional space-making effect that's very liberating. This pattern is appropriate in any style room.

Contemporary patterns

Geometrics are Contemporary patterns created from basic geometric figures, such as circles, squares, rectangles, triangles, and ovals. (See Chapter 9 for the low-down on Contemporary styles.) Most Contemporary patterns generally leave out flowers and other recognizable figures (which are considered Historical), but some designers make references to florals by rendering them less realistic by abstracting and stylizing the design.

Historic patterns are often made Contemporary by updating the colors and scale used in the pattern. Designers call this process *tweaking* the pattern design, because it remains recognizably Traditional but acceptably fashionable. Traditional fabrics and rug patterns become more Contemporary when designs are *edited* to become less complex, more economically manufactured, and more widely available.

It's a jungle out there

The most up-to-date Contemporary patterns today are essentially fresh takes on familiar subjects. Animal prints come to mind — from leopards and lions to cheetahs and zebras — on upholstery fabric, sheets, draperies, and more.

Domestic animals are also quite the rage — cute cats and kittens, dogs (especially pugs), horses, and chickens. Roosters are synonymous with Country styles. Country styles range from humble Country Cottage to grand English Country House style and charming French Provincial style.

Patterns of all sizes and shapes in strong, bold (and boldly contrasting) colors are very Contemporary. English designer Tricia Guild (www.designersguild.com) is renowned for her colorful textiles.

Current trends

After a decade or two of *Minimalism* (sparse color and little pattern), the pendulum has swung in the opposite direction. *Maximalism* is a style using mixed patterns, saturated colors, and lots of curated accessories. Start small by adding throw pillows. Go big by applying patterned flooring, wall coverings, and ceilings to work with patterned upholsteries and window treatments.



TIP

A complex mixing of patterns with seemingly wild abandon is a trend in upholstery, drapery fabrics, dinnerware, and interiors. Though the effect looks almost as if it happened spontaneously, it's meticulously thought out. Just remember: Mixing requires thoughtfully combining small- and medium-scaled patterns with one large dominant pattern — most often in the same colorway.

Planning for Pattern

You have tremendous leeway in decorating with pattern. Furthermore, you don't need to pay a lot of attention to the pattern's origin. That is, you don't really need to know whether it's French, English, Indian, or whatnot. Instead, ask yourself these questions:

- » Do I like the pattern?
- » Is it the right color for my room?
- » Is the fabric's texture right for my project?
- » Is the pattern scaled so that it works with my other furnishings?
- » Does this pattern create the mood I'm going for?

Of course, if you're designing a period room or a movie set, or if you just like to know these tidbits, you probably want to know the pattern's history and whether it's authentic for a particular period and place. But your home isn't a movie set. You make the decisions, so design your room the way *you* want. If you want guidelines, read on.

Picking your pattern

Any pattern that captures your fancy can serve as the basis for a foolproof decorating scheme. A textile, wallpaper, bedding, upholstery, area rug, plate, or gift wrap can provide inspiration.

One pattern will also suggest companion patterns such as stripes or checks. A large floral patterned textile may work well with a companion stripe in a medium or small size.



WARNING

Two equally big and beautifully colored floral competitors won't make for a peaceful combo.

Try these guidelines for pattern play and color scheming:

- » **Small rooms:** Choose a light background pattern for curtains or the rug, but use the light color (the same shade as the pattern's background) for the walls and floor, the largest background areas in the room. Pick out one of the pattern's dominant hues for upholstery color. Use the pattern's exciting accent color(s) for accessories.

- » **Large rooms:** Pick any pattern. Use the dominant hue in the textile pattern for large areas such as walls and floor. Use the pattern's background color for upholstery. Limit exciting accent colors to accessories.

Using pattern as background

Pattern used on walls, floors, and ceilings creates a distinctive background for a room (see Figure 6-2). Use it to compensate for inadequate architecture (a vertical stripe raises the too-low ceiling, for example), to make up for the lack of a view (choose a mural), or to add texture to lackluster drywall (yes, pattern implies texture).



FIGURE 6-2:
A bold pattern
make the sofa the
star and focal
point.

Photograph courtesy of Mark Candelaria, AIA (www.candelariadesign.com); photograph by Dino Tonn

Here are guidelines for using pattern as a background:

- » **Choose a pattern and its colorway based on the room's size.** Pattern proportion and colorway affect the perceived size of a room. An overwhelmingly large pattern in a warm colorway makes a small room look smaller. An underwhelming tiny pattern in a bland color makes a large room seem ho-hum. To pick the best pattern (and color) for your room, keep the room's size in mind:

- **Small rooms:** Select softly colored patterns with light backgrounds. Patterns with three-dimensional effects, such as a trellis pattern, ribbon-and-floral stripes, or toile de Jouy (a scenic pattern), make the room seem larger.
- **Medium rooms:** Pick stronger colored patterns. Stick to light backgrounds to make the room seem larger than it is.
- **Large rooms:** Go as bold as you dare. Choose strong, dramatic patterns with rich, exciting background colors.

» **Choose a pattern based on the house's overall style for compatibility.**

Don't create a split personality for your house by choosing Traditional patterns for a Contemporary house. Keep in mind your home's basic architectural orientation and your region of the country:

- **Contemporary rooms:** Stick to geometric patterns in neutrals and neutralized colors. Stripes are good. Avoid Traditional (realistic) floral patterns; go for abstract ones instead.
- **Traditional rooms:** For real compatibility, look to Traditional patterns — those based on historic examples called *documents*. They're easy to find and usually created in current colors. And if you need authentic reproductions of wallpapers and fabrics, you can find them via wall covering retailers, manufacturers, and interior designers. For Contemporary eclecticism, choose a Contemporary geometric.

» **Scale the pattern size to the room size.** A general guideline is use small patterns in small rooms, medium-size patterns in medium rooms, and large-scale patterns in large rooms. If you want to use a gigantic floral (perhaps a sunflower) in a small room (say, a laundry room or powder room), go ahead. Whimsy is great fun!

Giving upholstery center stage

Pattern steals the show. No one will ever notice how plain your room's architecture is when you have a showy display going on. Even if you live in an architectural gem, showcase a sofa by covering it in show-off fabric. A glazed chintz, a tree-of-life pattern, and a woven wool buffalo plaid are eye-catching, encouraging guests to feel at home.



TIP

When your upholstery is the star, for drama, cast the backgrounds (walls, floors, and ceilings) in a supporting role. Use plain and noncompeting materials and colors for these areas.

Using one pattern everywhere

Placing the same pattern on the walls and furniture eliminates the problems of color matching, pattern scaling, and waste! More important, it's an ideal solution for rooms with too many lines — attics come to mind.

In a client's attic main bedroom, Pat used a small, all-over calico-patterned wall-paper for walls and ceiling and a matching fabric for the canopy bed. The pattern's light background made the small attic's walls seem to disappear. Walking into the room was like walking into a jewel box.



TIP

The larger the room, the larger the pattern can be. Wall covering and fabric patterns designed to match or coordinate are an easy way to create a perfect room.

You can cover a small room in the same pattern from head to toe. In addition to the attic bedroom, Pat created for a client one of the most delightful rooms we've ever seen: It had the same strawberry pattern on the walls and furniture. The clever homeowner even had the pattern enlarged and made into a needlepoint rug, which covered the floor wall to wall!

CLASSIC FABRIC PATTERN MIXES FOR LIVING ROOMS

Why reinvent the pattern-mix wheel? Here are some classic fabric mixes:

- **American Country:** Large country quilt pattern (sofa), medium-scale folk-art floral print (lounge chairs), woven checkerboard checks (accent chairs), and medium stripes (window blinds)
- **American Southwest:** Navajo blanket print (sofa), medium scale (1- or 2-inch) woven check (lounge chairs), and woven narrow stripes (draperies)
- **English Country:** Large-scale glazed chintz (sofa and draperies), narrow stripes (slipcovered lounge chairs), and small calico or mini-printed pattern (accent chairs, pillows)
- **Traditional 18th century:** Large-scale floral chintz (sofa), crewel-work tree of life (wing chair), woven trellis pattern (lounge chairs), small all-over floral tapestry (accent chairs), and medium satin stripes (draperies)

Spreading pattern around

You can use a traditional strategy and combine a plain background on the walls and floor with patterned furniture. Then spread coordinating patterns around the room on the draperies, decorative pillows, Oriental lamps, or an area rug. This technique commonly combines several patterns in one room, which usually calls for clever mixing and matching of fabrics so they relate (for unity) and contrast (for interest).

Mixing patterns with confidence

After you get the hang of it, mixing patterns is fun. Here are some general guidelines that remove some of the guesswork from successfully mixing patterns. Use this list as a jumping-off point, and experiment fearlessly.



TECHNICAL
STUFF

Some of the classic fabric mixes — like the French use of cotton checks on the backsides of solid velvet-covered chairs — may have happened because the upholsterer ran out of velvet or the client didn't want to put expensive velvet on the back.



TIP

Consider these tips when mixing patterns:

- » **Create magic with a simple color scheme chosen from a textile.** White plus a color is easy: cobalt blue and white, rose pink and white, or apple green and white. Or go for real drama: Choose black and white! With your one-color scheme, you can either stick to one scale or vary the scales of motifs.
- » **Limit the number of patterns in a room.** Curb the number of patterns in a given room to three, until you're more familiar with using and mixing patterns. (Figure 6-3 illustrates an example of a three-pattern scheme and a five-pattern scheme.)
- » **Play the trim game.** Gain additional unity by using the same trim for your pattern mix. For example, if you're making throw pillows in four different patterns, use the same moss fringe on each. Or for both variety and unity, make your own *welting* (a covered cord trim) for pillows or upholstery by covering a ropelike cord (available in fabric and upholstery shops) in one fabric and using it as trim for the companion fabric, and vice versa.
- » **Practice your scales.** Whether you're using three or five patterns, choose one large dominant pattern for the largest area. Accompany the dominant pattern with medium- and small-scale secondary patterns.

FIGURE 6-3:
Combine three
patterns or five
patterns with
confidence.

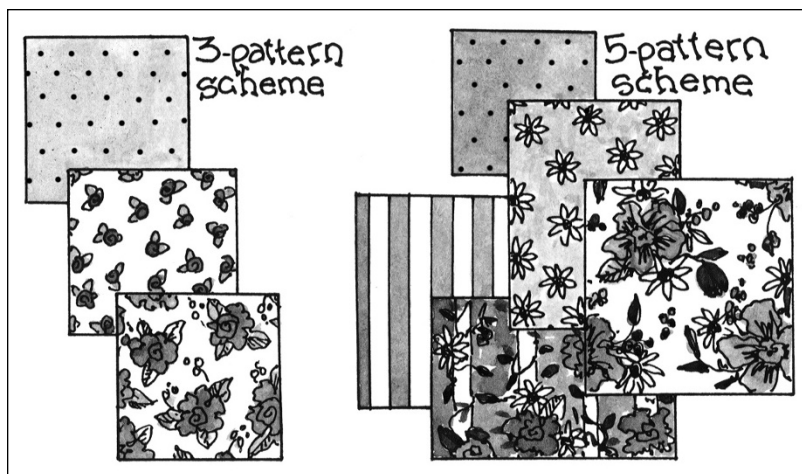


Illustration by Elizabeth Kurtzman



TIP

- » **Think positively — or negatively.** A *positive* printed fabric places dark motifs (such as flowers or geometrics) on a white or light background. A *negative* printed fabric (like a film negative) places light floral or geometric motifs on a dark background. Using positive and negative prints in the same or adjoining rooms is a quick and easy way to decorate.
- » **Up the ante by using five patterns.** If you're using five patterns, start with a large-scale dominant pattern — perhaps a big floral bouquet. Choose two medium-scale patterns (one floral, one geometric) in the same colors as the dominant fabric. Finally, choose two small-scale accent patterns (each in a different pattern or accent color).

Practice Makes Perfect

When you're mixing and matching patterns, let your eye be the final judge. Don't be afraid to try out combinations that you think may be over the top. The following sections provide some tried-and-true methods for experimenting without penalty.

Making sample boards

Creating sample or swatch boards lets you experiment to your heart's content. An 8½-x-11-inch sheet of bond paper or white cardboard works well. Clip a bunch of 3-x-5-inch samples of wall coverings and fabrics. Add photographs of area rugs,

patterned synthetic flooring, or decorative ceramic tiles — all patterned materials you're considering using.

Move around samples, swatches, and photographs until you find the mix of three to five patterns that pleases you most. Paste or tape those samples onto your mood board. (Let the sizes of your swatches represent their roles in your room — for example, large-scale patterns get larger swatches.)

Studying magazine pictures

Magazines are full of photographs that are invaluable when you're decorating. Patterns occur on many areas in the same room, providing great opportunities to study the *mix* (the number, size, and scale of the patterns, and the use of similar or contrasting backgrounds). Check out our favorite magazines — *Architectural Digest*, *House Beautiful*, *Southern Living*, and *VERANDA* — all of which show wonderfully diverse styles and periods.

When you're looking at a picture you especially like, take note of what catches your fancy. Observe where patterns are used (on the wall, the floor, or the furniture, for example). Notice how they're used — as a quiet or dramatic background, a bold attention-getter, or a gentle accent. Clip these sources of inspiration — maybe start a scrapbook!

Scanning wall-covering sample books

Wall coverings, increasingly popular, are shown in pattern books in room settings that illustrate the art of mixing and matching available patterns (saving shopping time). Study these illustrations. Look at the rooms that concern you most, such as the living room, dining room, bedroom, kitchen, or entry hall. Especially if you love wall coverings, note the following:

- » The variety of ways in which several wallpaper patterns are mixed and matched in living rooms of different styles and periods
- » The ways in which designers distribute pattern differently for special effects, in both Traditional and Contemporary rooms
- » How designers combine patterned art, area rugs, and numerous accessories in rooms with as many as five different wall-covering patterns, including attention-getting borders



TIP

If you haven't already discovered them, you'll probably find that your favorite magazines have websites. You don't usually need a subscription to browse wonderful interiors images that use pattern artfully! Check out *Architectural Digest* (www.architecturaldigest.com), *ELLE Decor* (www.elledecor.com), *House Beautiful* (www.housebeautiful.com), *Rue* (<https://ruemag.com>), *Southern Living* (www.southernliving.com), *VERANDA* (www.veranda.com), and others.



TIP

Social media favorites like Pinterest (www.pinterest.com) and Instagram (www.instagram.com) let you browse beautiful pictures. You can also connect to resources and online retailers. Some social media sites, like Facebook (www.facebook.com), support groups with special interests like decorating.

- » Understanding texture
- » Using texture in the background, as an accent, or as the star
- » Making the most of texture

Chapter 7

Toying with Texture

Texture is key to decorating character. Some styles are defined by their textural narrative. Lustrous satin bedding and shining mirrors define the 1920s-era glamorous Hollywood style. Raw-wood log walls and rough fieldstone fireplaces typify hunting lodges. Shaggy sheepskin rugs and smooth leather sofas suggest the heyday of Mid-Century Modern.

Get the picture? Without iconic texture, these looks wouldn't nearly be the same. Texture and textural contrast are magic wands in the designer's tool kit, ready for the clever decorator to wave. In this chapter, you find out how to use texture on your walls, floors, and ceilings, as well as in your furniture and accessories. You also pick up decorating tips for playing with texture to add appeal to any room.

Getting to Know Texture

Texture, the very visible characteristic physical structure of a material, appeals strongly to the senses of sight and touch. Figure 7-1 illustrates two very different textural effects — one in a living room and the other in a bedroom. The roughness of the heavy-looking stone fireplace in the living room contrasts sharply with the smooth and shiny satin sheets and tieback curtains in the bedroom.

FIGURE 7-1:
Different textures create contrasting visual and tactile effects.

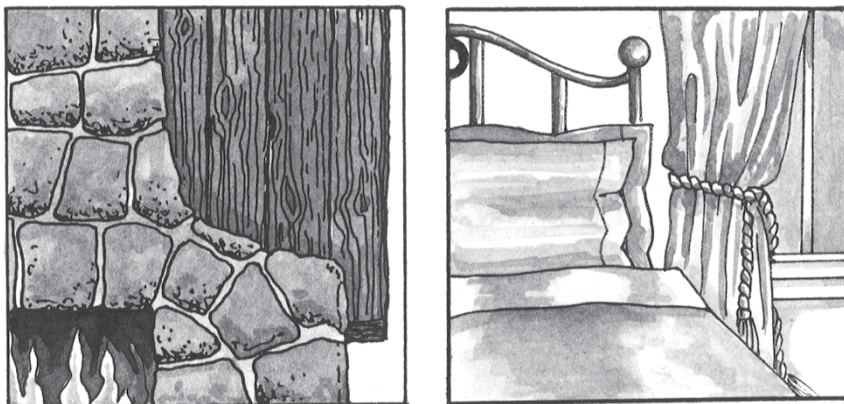


Illustration by Elizabeth Kurtzman



REMEMBER

As you decorate, take full advantage of texture. Provide visual and tactile interest with a contrast between smooth and rough, hard and soft, and shiny and dull surfaces.

Texture has feelings, too

First, people see texture; then they touch it. People talk about texture in both *visual* and *tactile* terms — how a material looks and feels. Handling textile fabrics gives rise to the notion of its *hand*. For example, people talk about velvet’s soft hand, silk’s smooth hand, and linen’s rough hand.

Paint textures (or finishes) have names, such as *matte*, *eggshell*, and *satin*. These terms are tactile and describe how the paint feels to the touch and how much light the surface reflects. Generally, matte finishes relate to casual and rustic interiors, and satin finishes work well in fine, dressy, and formal interiors.

Throwing its weight around

Texture contributes to the perception of an object’s physical weight, too — which affects where and when it’s used. For example, a polished marble tile floor, with its lean and light look, is at home in an elegant room. An unpolished marble tile, tumbled for a rustic and heavier look, works well in a Country-style setting.

Sheen, whether it’s in a shiny satin fabric or paint finish, implies lightness. A satin paint finish seems lighter in weight and more ethereal than a matte finish. Matte finishes seem heavier and earthier in comparison to satin sheens.

The same principle applies to upholstery fabrics. For example, corduroy seems heavy and bulky, partly because it reflects less light than a silk fabric, which seems lighter, finer, and richer. Traditionally, corduroy is a natural choice for a robust family room couch, and silk is ideal for a fine, formal living room sofa.

Texture is also important on the floor, a major part of any interior. By comparison, a shaggy rug looks duller and heavier than a velvet carpet, needlepoint rug, or marble tile floor and is more stylistically appropriate for a casual room. For more about flooring, head to Chapter 13.

Making Magic with Texture

Texture can play several roles: supporting background, dramatic accent, or strong star. Consider the ideas here for making the most of texture. Always give texture a clear role to play in your decoration, and it will add a sense of vitality.

Planning the background

Walls, floors, and ceilings are your rooms' background. Some people give more thought to the color of these surfaces than the texture. Think of them as equally important. Color can create spatial illusions, but the tactile sense adds another, unique dimension to style.



REMEMBER

Traditionally, texture is distributed in the following way:

- » Use a fine texture on the ceiling (so it never seems heavy or as though it's falling).
- » Use a medium texture on walls (so they seem supportive).
- » Use a heavier-looking (hard, smooth, and even) texture on the floor so it appears sturdy enough for people to walk on.

Applying texture in this way establishes a great background for sensuously soft upholstery and hand-waxed, almost matte-finished wood furniture. But you can also get creative with texture — maybe you'll like furry ceilings, for example.

Table 7-1 provides examples of textures that are often used together on walls, floors, and upholstery in a given room.

TABLE 7-1**Typically Paired Living Room Textures**

Walls	Floor	Upholstery
Period wood paneling	Marble, parquet	Silk, velvet, tapestry
Pine planks	Plank, tumbled stone	Woven cottons
Wallpaper	Parquet, woven rugs	Brocade, linen
Paint	Low-pile carpet	Velveteen, cottons
Faux paint	Marble, wood, carpet	Chintz, silk, cotton
Stone, brick	Plank, deep-pile carpet	Woven wools, cottons

Lining the walls with texture

Certain textures and styles traditionally go together. You may pair the following:

- » Antique brick with a Traditional family room or a city loft
- » Barnboard siding with a Country family room
- » Decorative ceramic tile with a French kitchen
- » Grass cloth with a tropical room
- » Stucco with any room in a Southwestern or Tuscan style
- » Knotty pine boards with an Early American or Country-style interior
- » Mirror and other glass with a penthouse
- » Shirred cotton fabric with a room with ethnic origins

Newer pairings often involve faux paint finishes that add texture and character to walls. Many paint brands make it easy to create fascinating textures with the right paints, brushes, and techniques. How-to brochures show you how to give your walls the look of suede, denim, linen, and more. They explain how to rag, roll, sponge, and drip your walls to newfound beauty. Check out your home improvement store for free seminars.

Textured painted walls can be boldly colored. Bolder colors — such as sunflower yellow, chartreuse, purple, and any hue of red — are the rule, even for older, Traditional-style homes. New colors are deep, “Hey, look at me!” tones of lemon yellow, Bristol blue, fuchsia, and hibiscus pink. (Forget about the old prim and proper, grayed-down pastels.)

The trend today is anything but monochromatic. Call this the *Polychrome Age* — and follow the lead of the avant-garde in mixing and matching textured bright

colors such as Monet's famous French Provincial yellow and blue, pimento red and Tuscan gold, and more, with as much glee as designers use to mix and match patterned fabrics.



REMEMBER

In Traditional interiors, textural contrasts are controlled — that is, not too strong or bold. Elements may surprise and delight, but they should never seem in violent opposition.



TIP

Some Contemporary styles call for using textured backgrounds daringly, in a surprising mix of strong, sometimes even warring, opposites. This technique requires a very good eye for dramatic couplings that seem contradictory but work because of at least one common element such as color.

The French do this textural mix very well. Think of the old mill with great stone walls and floors furnished with magnificent gold and crystal chandeliers, rich oriental carpets, silk upholstered furniture occupied by a once-royal couple.

A Contemporary example could be a formal, eclectic dining room with walls covered with barnboard siding. With the grayed-to-silver barnboard, hang an elaborate crystal and silver (not gold) chandelier that's wittily at odds with the barnboard's informality.

Restate the case for the elegance begun by the chandelier by choosing chairs upholstered in gray silk and trimmed with silver nailheads. Pair the chairs with a glass-and-chrome dining table. Tie it all together with a soft, luxuriously thick, gray, velvet-like wool rug, which relates in color to the barnboard and other furnishings but offers textural contrast to all other elements.



REMEMBER

Dare to use texture in a Contemporary way. Tip the balance one way (informal) or another (formal). Don't use equal amounts of opposites, or you'll end up with a room that seems confused and static.

Laying texture on the floors

Floors are for walking on, so no matter how rustic they look, they must have flat, smooth surfaces. This still leaves room for plenty of textural interest. Consider the differences between rough quarry tile, glazed ceramic tile, brick, wood, wool carpeting, resilient flooring, and wood flooring. Each material has a distinctive texture that traditionally works well with one or more wall textures. For example:

- » Brick contrasts richly with wood paneling and wallpaper and adds a slightly rustic, vintage note.
- » Ceramic tile contrasts nicely with many wall coverings, such as paneled and faux-painted walls, and can look dressy or relaxed, Historic or Contemporary.

- » Quarry tile works well with a variety of wall textures, including barnboard, linen-textured wallpaper, and fine or lightly textured paint in a casual room.
- » Resilient flooring pairs nicely with wall coverings, paneling, plaster, and painted wall finishes and, depending on its pattern, is at home in a variety of room styles and periods.
- » Wood flooring offers mild contrast, so it relates well to all wall materials and is appropriate for all decorating styles — whether the pattern is dressy or casual.
- » Wool carpeting with a cut pile provides a contrast to wall coverings, wood paneling, and plaster walls, and wool carpeting generally looks urbane, whether the room style is Traditional or Contemporary.

Adding textures to ceilings

Country-style rooms, like the one in Figure 7-2, often have interesting textured ceilings (with wooden beams that contrast texturally) that need no other decoration. Ceiling textures in Traditional and most Contemporary style interiors are generally smooth, which makes them ideally suited to any number of decorative treatments, ranging from an interesting paint color and texture (achieved by combing, swirling, or adding sand) to *anaglypta* (molded plaster carvings), murals, wall covering, and tenting with a variety of suitable fabrics.

FIGURE 7-2:
Texture stars in
rustic beams,
polished stone
countertop, and
waxed wood
floor.



Photograph courtesy of Mark Candelaria, AIA (www.candelariadesign.com); photograph by Dino Tonn

Applying texture as an accent

One of the quickest ways to spice up a ho-hum room, where just about every item has the same safe texture (not too rough, not too shiny, not too smooth, not too *anything*), is to bring in accessories that beg to be touched and handled.



TIP

Hand-thrown pottery, straw baskets, dried plants, palette knife paintings, wooden carvings, quilts, macramé hangings, pillows and throws — any of these accessories do a great job of adding texture to your home.

Use texture with respect. A little may go a long way, so proceed with caution. Don't overdo it. When in doubt, add one major highly textured accessory at a time until your eye tells you that you have enough.

Making texture the star

Try using one strongly textured decorative item as a *focal point* or an accent for an *architectural focal area*. A very large antique ceramic urn, its rough clay surface highlighted by an aged finish, amidst polished urbane furnishings serves as a focal point, for example. A mantel — an architectural focal point — is often highlighted by a highly textured decorative item such as sparkling crystal vases.

Think in terms of opposites: smooth versus rough, bumpy versus prickly, hard versus soft, undulating lines versus straight lines, or multi-depths versus a plane. Use this technique in a Contemporary room where people expect to see surprising juxtapositions and daring extremes.

Country-style rooms also welcome exaggerated textural focal points, such as quilts or woven wall hangings with stones, features, and interesting bits and pieces of wood incorporated. Baskets also provide textural interest.



TIP

Historically, Traditional rooms can handle strong but not too strong texture. Tapestries, embroidered wall hangings, and sculpture are some examples that work well. You can update such rooms with exciting colors and stronger textures for a look that's more current. First, you learn the rule; then you know how to create the aesthetic exception!

Working with Texture



TIP

You want texture to work *with*, not against, your decorating plans. Consider some of the following tips for using texture in your house:

- » Texture is all about contrasts. More contrast means less unity. And with less unity, the space seems smaller. So, keep contrasts subtle in small spaces, but go bolder in larger spaces.
- » Window shades and blinds in natural wood and metal are relatively high-contrast textures. In small rooms, reduce contrast by visually blending window treatments with walls in the same color.
- » Shag rugs with furry textures seem bulky, even in light colors. Use them to make big rooms seem smaller. Avoid shags in small rooms that you want to seem larger.
- » Sleek textures seem streamlined, lightweight, and Contemporary. They appear to take up very little space. That's what makes them ideal for small spaces. Rooms with backgrounds in these textures may need help from more heavily textured furniture and accessories that add depth, warmth, and comfort.
- » A great method for selecting textures is to create a *swatch board*. On a large piece of white cardboard, paste samples of fabrics, wood finishes, mica surfacing, wall coverings, and any other materials you like. Pasting them on the board helps you see how these textures relate. If you don't like what you see, keep experimenting until you find the combination that makes your eye happy.
- » Some textures reflect all light, creating luminous, ethereal moods. Other, rougher textures capture and hold some of the light, creating shadows that add a sense of mystery. Contemporary interiors celebrate light; Traditional interiors embody great *light and shadow play*, which is an effect that occurs between textures that absorb light and those that reflect light.



REMEMBER

Texture is powerful tool in your decorating toolkit. Be as subtle or bold as you want. Texture is ready, when you are, to rev up excitement in a plain-Jane room.

USING TEXTURE IN FURNITURE

In Traditional and Contemporary homes, mixing upholstery textures adds interest and drama. Traditional schemes call for textures that are subtly different. Choose some sturdy fabric with the boldest, wooliest, and shiniest texture — woven wool, velvet, quilted cotton or linen, or leather — for the sofa (usually the largest upholstered piece). Accent and lounge chair fabrics should be a little finer and lighter in weight. Diversity livens up the mix.

Contemporary mixes tend to be more extreme, pitting opposites against each other. What all these textures have in common is color or mood. Pair a sofa in matte velvet with sleek lounge chairs in lacquered leather in the same scarlet red, for example. Or cover the sofa in red and the chairs in white, but use the same type of city-slick upholstery. When it comes to upholstery for seating, whatever the texture, it must be comfortable.

Contemporary interiors might stick to one texture, in a variety of materials. Think that's not textural interest? Wrong! Consider an ultra-modern kitchen with satin-smooth maple cabinets; polished stainless-steel hood, appliances, and fixtures; glass tile floor, marble countertops; and glass chairs and table. Very slick. Ultra-cool.

Remember: Furniture frames count, too! Many pieces of upholstered furniture have exposed frames made of wood or metal. Count them, along with upholstery fabric, into your texture mix.

Other materials, such as woven wire, aluminum, wrought iron, and wicker (see the photograph), are very textured. Woven wicker furniture is even more texturally interesting when bamboo is mixed with seagrass and other unique textures, or when one of these materials is woven in a distinctive chevron, cable-knit (like the sweater), big basket check, or trellis pattern.



*Photograph courtesy of Mark Candelaria, AIA (www.candelariadesign.com);
photograph by Dino Tonn*

3

Perfecting Style

IN THIS PART . . .

Draw on timeless styles in your house.

Put contemporary styles to work for you.

Develop your personal style naturally based on your own sense of what works for you.

Choose the right furniture to suit your style.

- » Introducing styles from the past
- » Updating timeless styles to suit your taste

Chapter 8

Decorating with Timeless Styles

Timeless styles never go out of style. Beautiful, elegant, and stylish, these historic decorative approaches have been around for centuries. These looks have stood the test of time, and new generations of decorators have discovered how to use them to enhance their homes.

This chapter introduces you to the greatest hits of bygone eras up until the turn of the 20th century. You find out how people used these styles traditionally and discover how to use them to create your own personal look today. Let's get started!

CONSIDERING LASTING STYLES

Historic *styles* (named for people) and *periods* (named for eras) remain so popular today that they seem timeless. Updated for contemporary requirements, most styles and periods work well either in authentic historic rooms or with updated fabrics as an accent piece in more contemporary spaces.

(continued)

(continued)

A whole world of timeless, historic style is available for you to enjoy. You can mix and match styles successfully if you stick to good design principles. You may love the look of super-sleek Contemporary accented by a few clean-lined Neoclassical Louis XVI pieces. Go right ahead — both styles emphasize pure line.

Or you may adore the *inherited-over-generations* look typified by English Country. For this look, feel free to mix a range of fine wood pieces from different periods — just don't forget the important accessories like instant ancestor portraits, appropriate fabrics, and great colors that pull the whole look together.

For firsthand experience of the styles of bygone eras, conduct research that entertains as well as educates you. Go to grand museums and stately mansions. Don't pass up a chance to visit houses open to the public. And look at books on these subjects.

Understanding Historic style helps you develop a real appreciation for good, better, and best in design. Some call that *taste*. You can avoid decorating blunders if you develop an appreciation for the inherent design message of furniture.

By knowing which style is which (and what its message is), you can develop your own judgment about what's good, what you like, and ultimately, your own personal style.

Understanding Styles of the Past

Gothic design (12th to 16th centuries) is characterized by the pointed arch and vault, a technical development that made taller ceilings and larger windows possible. Designers continue to adapt Gothic design today. Gothic-inspired furniture and accessories (including stained-glass windows) are available for every room in your house.

Italian and Romantic

Today's interpretations of Italian and Romantic styles are updated, streamlined versions of elaborate Renaissance design: Chairs have wider seats, sizes are scaled to homes and not palaces, and there's less fussiness.

The 15th-century Early Renaissance (*Quattrocento*) was a transitional period between Gothic and Classical. Medieval austerity meant homes were minimally furnished. Today we see some mixed use of Gothic and Renaissance elements in both architecture and furniture.

The 16th-century High Renaissance (*Cinquecento*) was the high point of the Renaissance. Classical order based on Greek and Roman ideals dominated design. The great architect Palladio (1508–1580) reinterpreted Classicism for this new era. (He's famous for the Palladian window, a central window flanked by two shorter ones and topped by a sunburst.)

Furniture became more specialized and detailed. Storage cabinets, for example, were designed to hold personal and valuable objects. Walls featured painted scenery and lifelike *trompe l'oeil* (fool-the-eye) paintings, which are very popular now.



TIP

Current-day versions alter proportions and color schemes or simplify the heavy carving or detailed painting. Architectural elements — classic Palladian windows or embellished columns — may inspire you to add Renaissance touches.

To get that Renaissance look, wrap your walls in deep reds, hang plenty of tapestries, pile on gold and other metal accessories, and add stained-glass and jewel-covered ornaments. Renaissance touches are suited to Contemporary houses that feature Palladian windows. (Check out Versace's Home Collection [www.versace.com/us/en-us/home-decor] for a few pointers.)



TIP

Old World refers to an amalgam of European styles — Gothic, Renaissance, and Mediterranean. Old World influences (rounded archways, richly textured rustic wall surfaces, and Spanish tile roofs, for example) add a sense of splendor to Contemporary homes.

French

All French styles convey the love of romance, order, and *joie de vivre* (joy of life). The French adapted Italian styles by lightening and brightening dark colors and making furniture designs more delicate, formal, and feminine. (The French were the first to think of women's special needs.) The key French periods include the following:

- » **Louis XIV:** Under the Sun King (1638–1715), large-scale furniture, excessive ornamentation, and strong color contrast reigned. This style is revived from time to time.
- » **Régence (Regency):** An economy in architecture and decoration characterized the Régence, or Regency, style, a transitional style that lasted from 1700 until 1730. France's version of Baroque was elaborately decorative but still based on classically ordered character. Graceful scrolls and curves display the restraints and classical discipline of characteristic Rococo design.

- » **Louis XV:** This style (1715–1774) was feminine, sentimental, and delicate. Smaller rooms and smaller furniture ruled right along with delicate color schemes, curved forms, and Oriental influence. Louis XV chairs have never left fashion.
- » **Louis XVI (Neoclassic):** Greek and Roman design was rediscovered and reinterpreted. From 1760 to 1789, Louis XVI's clean lines and balanced decoration dominated. (Some experts use the dates 1774–1793 for this style.) Naturalism; simplicity in decorative forms; straight lines; compass curves; classical order; and Pompeii, Greek, and Adam influence were keenly felt. (For more about the Adam influence, see “England,” later in this chapter.)
- » **Empire:** Seen from 1804 until as late as the 1830s in Sweden, this style reflects the masculine military symbols of Napoleon's victories (1804–1814/15), including Egyptian motifs and Roman allegorical influences. Color schemes tended toward pale neutral tints for walls, floors, and ceilings, and pretty pastels for fabrics. Napoleon's wife, Josephine, influenced color sensibility with her muted blues, grayed purples, soft browns, and fleshy tones. The curved, saber chair leg and Campaign furniture (folding beds, chairs, and chests designed for easy moving about the countryside) remain popular.



REMEMBER

French style is elegant, refined, feminine, and a bit more formal than many other styles. Add flair by bringing in a bit of the glorious touches of French period style. Look for hand-painted tables, commodes, or other accent pieces to lend instant grace and delicate charm. If you have a creative bent, try your hand at fooling the eye with paint on furniture or walls.



TIP

For people who love French period furniture, many of the original cabinet-making companies continue to produce original designs as precisely as they were made during their heyday. The Louis XVI chair is everywhere.

English

During Tudor and Elizabethan times, when the Renaissance trend finally hit England (it was out of style in Italy), people didn't get it — at first. Inigo Jones brought Palladian architecture back with him from Italy during the 1600s. Sir Christopher Wren, the leading influence in the arts had great impact on architecture and design. His influence was so big that some people call the period England's “Wrenaissance.”



TIP

The design of chair and table legs is a clue to the style of a particular piece of furniture (see Figure 8-1), indicating where it can successfully be used.

FIGURE 8-1:
Chair and table
legs are quick
indicators of
timeless style and
period furniture.

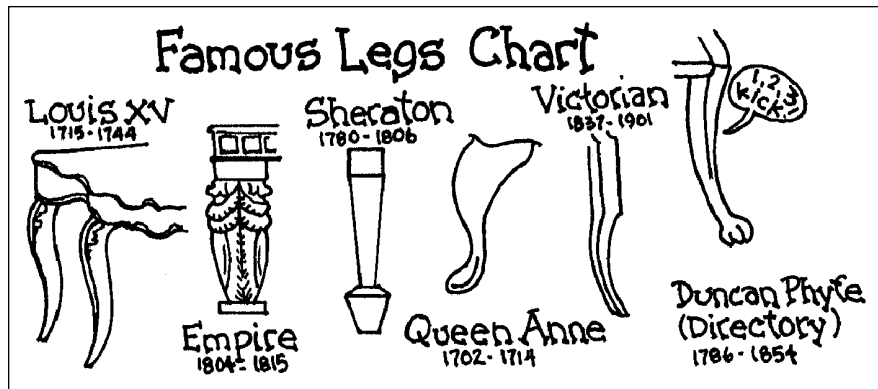


Illustration by Elizabeth Kurtzman

The important styles of England (usually lumped together by furniture retailers as *Traditional*) are the following:

- » **Adam:** French Rococo and ancient Roman styles of Pompeii influenced the Adam brothers, furniture makers and trendsetting designers. The brothers reveled in finely designed, delicately scaled, elaborately detailed interiors and furnishings. They covered their furnishings in rich distinctive colors of dulled blue, pale yellow-green, light gray, and lavender.
- » **Chippendale and Rococo:** These styles featured generous scale and chairs with generally straight legs. Some chair backs reflected Oriental influence in the shape of the top of the chair and in fret-like patterns in lieu of back splats. By contrast, Chippendale chairs (named for a furniture maker) seem more masculine than the curvy Queen Anne chairs and the lighter-scaled Sheraton and Hepplewhite chairs. Colors popular with Chippendale's furniture were neutralized color schemes that were deeper than the French colors of the same time.
- » **Georgian:** Classical details from Greece and Rome influenced the great furniture designers of the Georgian era (named for England's king). The tendency was toward heavy proportion and detail. Designers still imitate and use this style today.
- » **Hepplewhite:** Well-scaled chairs with a distinctive shield-shaped back characterize this style, created by and named for the furniture maker.
- » **Queen Anne:** Seen from 1702 until 1714, this style (named for the reigning monarch of England) featured curvilinear design and Oriental influence. The Queen Anne chair, with its generous curved (sometimes called *cabriole*) leg, is an enduring favorite, especially for dining chairs.
- » **Sheraton:** This style, named for the furniture maker who created it, includes more delicately scaled furniture with Neoclassical elements and design motifs.



TIP

» **Victorian:** This period of decorative excess was also known as the *mauve decade*, thanks to the dramatic wine-pink and *aubergine* (eggplant) colors that were widely used. Factory-made furniture was available in abundance. Victorian-era design incorporated nostalgic renderings of Gothic, Renaissance, Moorish, and Oriental designs.

Lacy curtains, layers of patterns, and armloads of accessories create the Victorian feel. Your home needn't be Victorian to be decorated in the style, but it does work best in older homes (or in newer homes that lack a distinct style).

Germanic

Named for a popular cartoon character, Biedermeier (early 19th century) is a solidly masculine furniture style based on French and English Empire and Neo-classical elements. Biedermeier's most distinctive feature is its dramatic use of light- and dark-colored woods.

DISCOVERING HISTORIC-STYLE DESIGNERS

A few designers in the 20th century have contributed to the enduring popularity of Traditional styles. Here are a few:

- **Elsie de Wolfe** (1865–1950) was one of the very first design professionals. In 1905, she was commissioned to design Manhattan's Colony Club and became famous for its trellis room. She transformed dark Victorian interiors into light, intimate, and colorful spaces with heavy reliance on 18th-century French furniture and accessories.
- **Sibyl Colefax** (1874–1950) took up decorating after the Wall Street Crash of 1929 and eventually founded a firm that continues in present day as Colefax and Fowler, famous for chintzes, wallpapers, and woven fabrics. She was renowned for lavish use of Chintz and grand English Country House look.
- **Syrie Maugham** (1879–1955) opened her own decorating firm in 1922. She showcased her music room with all-white painted furniture — a radical departure from heavy, dark, cluttered Victorian stylings. She bought Historic style up to date and went on to create interiors with baroque accessories and bold shots of color.
- **Dorothy Draper** (1889–1969) launched the first interior design firm in the United States in 1923. Her signature style was called *Modern Baroque*, a mashup of unexpected bold colors with liberal dashes of glitz. Her motto was, "If it looks right, it is right." Her firm lives on today under the guidance of Carleton Varney. Go to www.dorothydraper.com to learn more.

For stylistic impact, mahogany, ebony, or ebonized *fruitwoods* (woods from various fruit trees) were offset by blond or light-colored fruitwoods. Inlays of dark wood accented light wood, and sometimes vice versa. Heavy gold hardware was sometimes used as drawer pulls or decoration.



The simple but bold elegance of Biedermeier makes it very well suited for people who favor masculine style. Add eclectic touches to a contemporary home with Biedermeier. You can use the style in any room, depending on your preference.

Scandinavian

Uptake of trends was slow in previous centuries, and it wasn't until the 18th century that French influences were taken up with gusto under the direction of King Gustav III. Classic 18th-century Swedish Gustavian style has all the grace and elegance of French Louis XV and Louis XVI, without the excess.

The Gustavian style was simpler, cleaner, and more restrained than its French counterparts. This elegant aesthetic made the style a mainstay of European Neoclassical period collections. The color palettes can be rich or lean, with emphasis on fresh shades of blues and yellows.

Simplicity and comfort are the hallmarks of both historic and recent style trends. (We cover Mid-Century Modern and Contemporary in Chapter 9.) Simple doesn't necessarily mean plain. Walls were often stenciled or decorated with florals, checks, and stripes. Fabric-covered walls weren't uncommon during this time.

Classic Scandinavian interiors feature lots of heartwarming decorative motifs and bright shots of color. Stenciling is a popular decorative treatment for walls.

A design staple of homes in Sweden is the *Kakelugn* tile stove clad in decorative, colorful patterned tiles. More humble versions feature plain colored tiles. *Kakelugns* were designed to maximize the heat and burn time of wood, the only source of fuel during the 300-year mini ice age from 1500 to 1800.

American

American style, with its cleaner, simpler design approach, came about by necessity. Furniture makers had limited materials to work with and were isolated from European trends. They created regional or vernacular styles by adapting trends seen in cabinetmakers' books from Chippendale and others.

American political idealism (democracy and equality) affected more than the government; it influenced designers to create furniture that could be used by

everyone. The rocking chair, one of the earliest American furniture designs, has been used by everyone and in almost every room, from President Kennedy's Oval Office to grandma's front porch.

Basic American style (before the 20th century, when everything became international) is characterized by its lack of pretentiousness. Function, simplicity, and honest materials are characteristic of American styles in general.

Early American styles

You can break down Early American style into the following categories:

- » **Colonial Gothic:** Early settlers brought their homeland's traditions with them. Homes and furnishings were based on Gothic and Tudor style. As affluence grew and more aristocrats moved here, more refined English styles began to influence style. Today people may use Gothic-inspired Windsor chairs in a mostly Modern kitchen.
- » **Gothic Revival:** Carpenter Gothic architecture, with pointed arches, tracery ceilings, and stained-glass windows, kept Gothic's influence alive.
- » **Greek Revival:** *Federal style* is the name given to furniture designed for the Greek Revival houses during the early years of the United States. Classic Greek ideals and art inspired these 18th-century furnishings. Duncan Phyfe (1768–1854), whose name was given to a saber-legged chair and a distinctive pedestal table with three saber legs, is one of the best-known furniture designers. The clean, simple lines of a modern tester bed have their origins in Classic design, so they can be eclectically mixed with historic Classic styles such as Greek Revival.

Touches of pure Americana can add decorative — and patriotic — appeal. Scour antique and junk stores for eagles, flags, and other icons of independence. Think red, white, and blue for a dynamic color scheme. Don't think your interior needs be Traditional either. Some very Contemporary Americana continues to be created by artists like Jasper Johns (famous for his American flags).

Some collectors display Americana austere, in a gallery-like manner and with Contemporary furniture. Designer John Lyle blends historic American, Asian, and Contemporary elements together for dramatic effect (see Figure 8-2).



TIP

Styles may come and go suddenly. Any style that makes a comeback is generally tagged with the terms *Neo*, *Retro*, or *Revival*, to distinguish it from its predecessor.

FIGURE 8-2:
Designer John
Lyle pairs a
Chippendale
chair with a
modern desk in
his country house
living room.



*Photograph courtesy of John Lyle (www.johnlyledesign.com);
photograph by Mark Roskams*

American Country

Around the time of America's bicentennial in 1976, a new decorating style was developing that borrowed from European provincial styles. This casual look used up-to-date fabrics and furnishings with old mix-and-match furniture. Painted and distressed finishes added a lighthearted note. Accessories were practical — baskets and quilts. American Country continues to evolve, but comfort, casual informality, country accessories, and a lack of pretense remain characteristic. Contemporary American Country can be elegant (see Figure 8-3).



TIP

Country is a state of mind. Enrich any room with views of country landscapes for an instant breath of fresh air. You can use idyllic scenes in virtually any interior — simply match the mood and level of formality.



REMEMBER

Don't confuse American Country style with English Country style. Simple, care-free, and relaxed, American Country style is down-home living at its best. Formalized (relatively), fussy, and floral, English Country style reflects the aristocratic lifestyle.

FIGURE 8-3:
Designer Marilyn
Trainor Storey
covers a Queen
Anne chair in a
textile she
designed.



Photograph courtesy of MS Design Maven

Asian

Two Chinese furniture styles are perennial favorites: Ming (1368 to the 1640s) and Qing (1640s to the early 1900s). Both styles are elegantly restrained. Embellishment always underscores that the simple lines of these pieces were designed for beauty, function, and contemplation.

Antiques, usually less expensive than European antiques, are increasingly difficult to find, but you can easily notice the influence of antique Chinese furniture. The lacquered finishes (*japanning*) found on Chinese furniture (red from the 14th century and black popularized in Europe and America during the 17th century) prompted many copies then and now called *Chinoiserie*.

Asian styles range from the Japanese and Chinese to Indian themes. Each region has its own distinctive look. Japanese styles tend to be more minimal than Chinese or other regions. Zen, tranquil, and minimal, the Japanese approach uses tatami mats, shoji screens, and upholstered floor pillows. Sometimes, Japanese style incorporates ornate statement Chinese-style pieces in Zen-like interiors.

Traditional Korean antique-style cabinets with embellishments are available even at big-box stores. Korean apothecary cabinets are designed to store traditional medicines in tiny drawers with larger storage space. Bedecked with gold-tone hardware and Korean characters, these herb cabinets can be used for storage in various rooms to great effect.

Global influences

Global style is commonly influenced by East Asian, Moroccan, and African aesthetics. Global styles blend diversely sourced traditional and updated motifs, textiles, furniture, and artwork. Many furnishings are made exactly as they have been for centuries.

The wonderful thing about global influences is that many of these traditional pieces of furniture can work well with contemporary design. A bold dash of unusual forms, materials, patterns, and textures can take any room to a new level.

Adding global influences can add impact, even if it's only one standout piece. Folding room dividers add flair and can partition multiuse space. Add a dash of global style with area rugs (layering multiple rugs adds more pizzazz) and stacks of patterned floor cushions.

Using Timeless Approaches in Your Home

You can select decor using one of two easy approaches. Both approaches will let you achieve the style of your dreams:

- » **Choose a style and stick with it throughout the house.** You'll achieve a great sense of continuity and harmony. You can still play with color schemes and levels of formality in fabrics and accessories to achieve the right look.
- » **Use one style in the public rooms and other styles in the private rooms.** In your quest for harmony, you have to balance elements, such as line, color, and texture. Select more formal, dressy styles for the main public areas, and more casual, relaxed styles for private rooms. You may choose, for example, 18th-century Traditional (a mix of English, French, and American furniture) in the living and dining rooms and switch over to Louis XV (French Provincial) in the primary bedroom, Mission style in another bedroom, and American Country style in yet another bedroom.

Want to mix and match Timeless styles with Contemporary? Add elements of Asian-inspired lighting and Contemporary accessories with a historic wallpaper for an eclectic look (see Figure 8-4).



TIP

Not sure which style is right for you? Take a good look at furniture styles that interest you. Check your impression against our descriptions of the design philosophy.

FIGURE 8-4:
The bold blue and
white of the
historic mural
wallpaper is at
home anywhere,
any time.



*Photograph courtesy of John Lyle (www.johnlyledesign.com);
photograph by Mark Roskams*

Is the style too fine, too rustic, too formal, too friendly, or just right? Keep narrowing down your selection until you find the style that fills your decorating bill.

Sticking to one style doesn't have to be monotonous. You may use gilded furniture frames in the living room, painted woods in the bedroom, and fruitwoods in the den, family room, and dining room, all in Louis XV style.

Designing Your Own Homage to Historic Style

Historic styles can be interpreted to suit your personal style.

Traditional looks

Many contemporary homes in the United States are a mashup of traditional styles (high ceilings, arched windows, moldings, and enclosed rooms) and contemporary approaches (open space, big windows or no windows, plain trim, and clean lines).

The architectural bones can be dressed up either way — as Traditional or Contemporary. Some rooms may be gussied up in Traditional looks in formal rooms (dining room, living room) but go casually Contemporary in high-function, informal spaces (media room, kitchens).



TIP

For the happiest mix of styles, remember the old maxim, “Birds of a feather flock together.” Combine large-scale furniture with other large-scale styles. Put fancy furniture with other fancy styles.

Don’t mix casual (pine or oak) and formal (mahogany or cherry) furniture in the same room — it will end up looking cheap. Avoid mixing several different woods, in general, although current designers love to bring various woods together in a room. When in doubt, consult a designer/decorator or a person who is an expert in wood furniture.

Continuing productions and reproductions

If you love the style and want the look without the hefty price tag, check out reproductions and continuing productions of styles. You can find any kind of style — from simple country looks to regal gold-embellished veneered pieces.

Remarkably, some furniture makers in Europe have been making certain pieces for centuries. Not only can you find furniture that has been in continuing production, but you can also find upholstery and other fabrics that have been in production since the 1700s and 1800s.

Because people were smaller and lighter and dressed very differently two to three centuries ago, furniture makers have updated these classics. These updated versions are designed to meet the needs of technology-driven homes.

Adapted styles are more durable and more comfortable than the originals. Today, people are far more interested in comfort, convenience, and function than people of the past were.

Today’s homes tend to have higher ceilings and more space in general than homes of the 18th and 19th centuries. Updated styles are generally bigger in scale and offer different fabric choices for today’s lifestyle. Keep all these factors — and your preference for personal style — in mind when choosing period-style furniture.

Some makers of English, Italian, and French styles are based elsewhere in the world. You can order ornate styles directly from these makers in Asia, Egypt, and elsewhere around the globe and have it shipped to your home.

HOW TO TELL REPRODUCTIONS FROM ANTIQUES

If you're planning on going antiques, you'll want to know how to tell a reproduction piece from an antique. Stores that bill themselves as antique shops may be carrying the real deal, vintage reproductions, or a mix of trash and treasure. Reputable dealers and furniture makers label their pieces properly. Here are some signs to help you eyeball the difference:

- **Check out the types of wood used.** Furniture makers in days of yore used different types of woods for various areas of the furniture. Lower-cost secondary wood was used for unseen parts such as drawers or backs of furniture. Expensive woods were used where they showed. Check out all the surfaces and open drawers, and look at all angles. An antique won't have any manufactured-looking wood.
- **Look for signs of aging.** Real antiques will show uneven signs of wear and tear. Reproductions may have manufactured wear and tear that will look regular and consistent. Check for signs of wear on arms, legs, and any moving parts.
- **Eyeball the color.** *Patina*, the glossy sheen on a surface that builds up after repeated polishing and aging, is a telltale sign that a piece is old. Truly old furniture (more than 100 years) may have an uneven or inconsistent color. Too even a color, a lack of patina, and a perfect look could indicate that the piece is a reproduction. Examine the underside to see if there's raw wood, one sign of an antique.
- **Look for shrinkage.** Wood is a living thing that needs consistent humidity to maintain its good looks. Over time, wood shrinks and splits, and seams may appear. Sometimes, the wood will lose its shape. If there are no signs of shrinkage, this could be a sign that it's a reproduction or that various pieces have been replaced.
- **Scan for manufacturing techniques.** Antique furniture won't have modern screws and nails, so if you see any, it's obviously a new piece. Time-honored furniture-making techniques include mortise-and-tenon joints, and hand-cut dovetails.
- **Scrutinize the veneer.** *Veneer* (a thin layer of exotic or expensive wood that is laid over a solid wood) has gotten thinner over time. If you can see that the veneer is very thin, most likely the piece was made after 1900 and may be a reproduction.
- **Survey for imperfections.** Antiques were 100 percent handcrafted, so you should expect to see slight imperfections and variability, including slight asymmetry. Reproductions tend to look more perfect because of the use of modern tools and techniques. Look for signs of uneven planing, too.
- **Suss out the stuffing.** Up until the end of 19th century, upholstered furniture was stuffed with natural fillers like horsehair, hay, or cotton (or a mix of these). Restoration of upholstered furniture will preserve the original stuffing to maintain the furniture's history and value.



TIP

Search the web for “antique reproductions” and you’ll find dozens of manufacturers and online retailers. You can find almost any style with customizable options in finishes and fabrics online.

Your favorite search engine will also yield local retailers and antique shops. (An *antique* is anything over 100 years old.) Some antique stores are more like “junk-tique” stores. If you love the thrill of the hunt and don’t mind driving, browsing these shops for unexpected finds can be a real treat.

Antiques and collectibles

Antiques are the real deal, and of much higher value (and resale) value than reproductions. If your budget allows, acquiring antique pieces can be an investment.



WARNING

Children and pets don’t mix well with antiques. Some antique chairs may be too fragile to sit in. If you adore the idea of owning a bit of history, you may want to be selective about which rooms you use your antiques in (preferably those used by responsible adults).

You can acquire antiques and enjoy the beauty of owning an authentic piece. Some furniture makers have continuing productions of a timeless style. Other manufacturers make authentic reproductions. Still others have updated versions of timeless styles.

Some of the most famous places to shop for antiques are in London, New York, and Paris. The Paris flea market is perhaps the best place to shop for antiques and collectibles. The big auction houses Christie’s and Sotheby’s have a brick-and-mortar presence in many cities across the globe. Better yet, these two global giants have strong online auction sites and buy-now options. Don’t forget local and regional auction houses and antique stores, too.



TIP

You don’t have to treat Historic-styled furniture with awe. Draping a big-scaled buffalo-plaid blanket over a Louis XIV chair, or a Navajo rug over a Louis XV chair, can look very “of the moment.” Or, spray-paint Victorian wicker chairs, make bold-colored raw silk cushions for them, and place the chairs around a glass-topped dining table for an exciting mix!

- » **Contrasting Contemporary and Historic design**
- » **Looking at popular Contemporary styles**
- » **Considering Contemporary decorating looks**

Chapter 9

Designing with Contemporary Styles

Contemporary design is all about styles of the present day. As a term, *Contemporary* distinguishes today's designs from those of centuries prior to the 20th century (technically from January 1, 1901 to December 31, 2000). Whether rooted in new ideas or paying homage to styles of the past, Contemporary style is always evolving. Trends wax and wane, but one thing remains the same: good style!

In this chapter, we explain the origins of Contemporary style from its roots in Modernism of the 20th century. We show you some popular Contemporary furniture and decorating styles, as well as furniture designers and resources for snapping up Contemporary style for your own home.

Transitioning from Timeless to Contemporary Style

What's hot today may — or may not — become a lasting style. What was hot in some previous era may come back in an updated way with different proportions, new materials, state-of-the-art construction techniques, and fresh takes on details.

The clean-lined, unfussy look most often associated with the modern age in International Modernism (see the “Tracking Contemporary style” sidebar) had its roots in America with freethinkers — from Shakers and Utopians to artists and intellectuals — who saw the need for a new way of furnishing the home.

Driven by lofty ideals, these artisans, craftsmen, and designers began making furniture and everyday household items that reflected (or reacted to) social conditions, technology, and values of a growing middle class. Honest (no fancy veneers over standard woods), simple (no extravagant carvings), and utilitarian (function first) styles emerged. See Figure 9-1 for a current take on Contemporary design.



FIGURE 9-1:
Designer John
Lyle combines
graceful lines and
edgy art.

*Photograph courtesy of John Lyle (www.johnlyledesign.com);
photograph by Andrew Welch*

Shaker furniture, for example, was based on *spiritually correct* mathematical proportions and emphasized their “cleanliness is next to godliness” values. Shaker chairs were designed to be hung on wall pegs for accessible storage and easy floor cleaning.

The Arts and Crafts movement, launched in the late 19th century by William Morris, spurred the development of furnishings and textiles designed by artists (hence, Arts) that were handmade (hence, Crafts) and nature-based (anti-mass production). Morris’s designs are still in production.

These Gothic-inspired designs were a revolt against overwrought (tasteless) Victorian furniture. Machine-made embellishments on poor-quality materials rankled artist-designers such as Charles Eastlake, another important tastemaker of the Arts and Crafts movement, who called for less ornamentation and more discernment in design.

Mission style in the United States, inspired by Arts and Crafts, brought artists and artisans together to handcraft furnishings with an emphasis on naturally finished woods; honest, skilled craftsmanship; and simplified ornamentation.

Today, new generations continue to discover and respect Mission style's strong masculine, natural look, thanks to Stickley (www.stickley.com) and other manufacturers who keep this style alive and easily available.

TRACKING CONTEMPORARY STYLE

Although the Modern or Contemporary design age begins roughly with the start of the 20th century, we begin with designs that prompted the move from Historic to Contemporary style and continue to be favorites.

- **Shaker (1830–1850):** Traditional furniture designs stripped to bare essentials (few turnings, no decorations), producing furniture plain in appearance. Natural materials; no ornamentation; strong emphasis on function. Today, familiar rush-seat Shaker-style chairs are available as antiques or as reproductions and copies.
- **Gothic Revival (1851–1914):** Emphasized natural materials. Designs based on nature. Handcrafting versus machine-made. Arched-top chair crests, rails and knobs, and lots of turnings show up today in side chairs for the dining room and kitchen.
- **Adirondack (1890s–present):** Rustic, natural, often made of bark-covered logs or simple planks. Look for junk shop finds when in the country (for authenticity), or purchase handmade new versions of these comfy furnishings, which translate into today's lodge look that also contains Western motifs and icons.
- **Art Nouveau (circa 1900):** The first new style not using any historical reference was based on flowing lines of leaves and vines and influenced by Japanese art. Designs today show up most often in lamp bases, mirrors, and candlesticks.
- **Arts and Crafts/Mission in America (circa 1900):** Simple designs executed in natural wood. Emphasized hand craftsmanship, quality materials, and strong, clean lines. Also called Golden Oak. Widely seen in today's Stickley chairs and other furniture that uses the same designs as earlier origins.

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- **Art Deco (1918–1939):** Fashion-oriented. Influenced by primitive art and cubism. More color, pattern, and grand ornamentation, including motifs such as zigzags, electricity bolts, and skyscrapers. Often seen today in headboards and accent chairs.
- **Bauhaus (1919–1933):** Design based on unifying art and technology. Little ornamentation. Function, form, and materials (metal tubing, glass, and other technological, machine-made materials) most important. Emphasis placed on machine-made, efficient production. Knoll (www.knoll.com) and others produce the original designs.
- **International Modern (1925–1947):** No regional influences, historic references, ornamentation, or unnecessary elements is what made Modern furniture so radical in its time. Details come from the interesting use of modern materials. Emphasis is on machine-age technology — the house as a machine for living.
- **Mid-Century Modern (1940–1959):** Future-oriented, these furniture designs were machine-made, spare in detail, and designed for the post–World War II economy. Designers such as Milo Baughman (produced by Thayer Coggin) and Charles and Ray Eames (produced by Herman Miller) created enduring designs available today. It's possible to find original pieces or simply buy continuing productions of these great designs.
- **High-Tech (1980–1990s):** Emphasis on exploitation and exposure of elements of science and technology for home use. Shows the construction of the interior. Uses industrial materials for the home. Electronic and space-age details important. Celebrates and makes room for the machine.
- **Postmodern (1976–present):** Eclectic mixes of design styles and modern decorative themes, Postmodern masters like Michael Graves reimagined classism and modernism with saturated color, vivid pattern, and strong contrasts. Using mixed materials of natural, synthetic, and recycled, these styles can be whimsical and irreverent.
- **Memphis (1981–1987):** Inspired by Art Deco and Pop Art styles, this group of designers created bold and bright furniture. Designed to be decorative and functional, critics said the look would not last. But Memphis designer Nathalie Du Pasquier revitalized the look in fashions in 2013 and continues strong today.
- **Contemporary:** Contemporary (meaning “of the moment”) combines influences, trends, and new technologies without strict adherence to any one design philosophy. Current trends include designs that blend styles and periods but are streamlined for today's taste. (Designs based on Traditional styles are considered Contemporary interpretations and are sometimes called Transitional.)

Focusing on Modern Style

Modern is an historic style. At the start of the 20th century, several design movements began the radical shift from the ornate styles for the elite to sleek, machine-age furniture for everyman. Modern style encompasses many schools, including International Modern, but it's often referred to as just *Modern*.

Architects and designers, such as Frank Lloyd Wright, Walter Gropius, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Le Corbusier, and Marcel Breuer, pioneered Modern as a distinct architectural style. Many of these people also designed furniture. Structural qualities were emphasized — the furniture was as much a sculpture as it was a chair). All details were strictly abstract — not derived from nature, and certainly not symbolic.

Technology and economy (maximum value, minimum expenditure) were important, as were comfort and convenience. No ornamentation — no carving, hand-painting, or form of decoration — was introduced into these pure designs. These designs were intended to free people from outmoded social constraints.

Modern — now frozen in time and place — is historic. The rigid design manifesto of the mid-20th-century architects, interior and industrial designers who pioneered the style is a relic of the past. Modern style falls under the Contemporary style umbrella (see the sidebar “Tracking Contemporary style,” earlier in this chapter).

Cozying Up to Mid-Century Modern

Modernism in America had a bit of a different twist than its European counterparts and is sometimes referred to as Mid-Century Modern. As a term, Mid-Century Modern came into being with Cara Greenberg's 1984 book, *Mid-Century Modern: Furniture of the 1950s* (Harmony Books/Crown Publishers).

Many European designers created furniture that caught the imagination of Americans. Scandinavian designers were especially influential.

In the United States, this distinctive look was pioneered by designers like Charles and Ray Eames. The couple created furniture that emphasized comfort. Their Executive Chair with its five-leg metal base and padded plywood shell seat (with matching ottoman) was the first design in history that fully supported each area of the human body from head to toe.

The Eames Lounge Chair and ottoman remain a hot item in home décor. You'll see it used in nearly every room of the house, including bedrooms. The trend-setting style continues to be manufactured in its original design and in many copies. Herman Miller sells directly to consumers.

Design Within Reach (www.dwr.com) is also an excellent source for all things Mid-Century Modern. DWR has been a strong player in the resurgence of this look. The site also carries Milo Baughman for Thayer Coggin. Baughman was a pioneer designer of modern furniture both during the era and up to 2003, the year of his death. To see his designs, go to Thayer Coggin (www.thayercoggin.com/milo-baughman-gallery).

Another great source of furniture and style inspiration is Restoration Hardware, both in its stores and online at RH Modern (<https://rhmodern.rh.com>). Search the Internet for *Mid-Century Modern*, and you find not only major players but also local vintage shops and auction houses. You're likely to find authentic pieces up for auction and resale near you.

Catching Up with Contemporary Today

Contemporary is a fluid concept. Contemporary designs encompass a wide range of looks loosely based on updates on Modern, French, English, and other styles (see Figure 9-2).

Minimalism has been a huge trend over the last 20 years. British architect and designer John Pawson is a notable and influential Minimalist. Minimalism eliminates extraneous details to focus on essential form and function. The look emphasizes strong, clean lines, and minimal furniture and accessories. Color palettes tend toward the neutral. You'll never see lots of color or pattern, either. Textures tend to be downplayed as well. The vibe can be austere and almost monastic looking.

Over the years, the need for warmth and personality caused a reaction to this cold and impersonal look. Gradually, Minimalism gave way to Maximalism, a too much is never enough approach. Pattern and color are rich and intense. The decorative approach is playful yet curated — only the best and most meaningful salon-style hangings of art and display of objects.

The trend toward Maximalism has let designers incorporate Victorian-style furniture with Memphis-era playful vibes. There's a real mash-up of over-the-top pattern in furnishings, wallcoverings, floorings, and even ceiling treatments. Legendary 20th-century designers like Dorothy Draper are considered the grandparents of the current push toward exuberant expression in interiors.

FIGURE 9-2:
Traditional elegance meets contemporary elan in this Joe Ruggiero design.



Photograph courtesy of the Joe Ruggiero Collection (www.joeruggiero.com)

Modern-inspired styles

Design styles based on Modern style depart from its strict rules. Two major differences are more curvilinear shapes and more colorful upholstery and finishes. One current version of Modern, for example, is Romantic Modern. This furniture boasts sensuous curves and pretty pastel-colored upholstery, a style we credit to renowned designer Vladimir Kagan (he's famous for the iconic kidney-shaped coffee table).

The Romantic Modern decorating style chooses pastel colors over stark white, gray, or black for walls and furniture; substitutes frosted and decorated glass for clear glass; and may add a crystal chandelier for elegant fun and whimsy.

Transitional-inspired styles

What is Transitional furniture style? It's a blend of Traditional (Historic) and modern Contemporary design elements. Transitional styles create a moderate look that's neither stuffy nor trendy. The look balances massive and heavy (sometimes referred to as *masculine*) with graceful and light (sometimes referred to as *feminine*).



TIP

A harmony of straight and curved lines, the Transitional style is perfect for those craving a classic look that has a modern sensibility.

Transitional styles are inspired by Historic styles like Baroque, Rococo, Romantic, and Neoclassical. These styles show their design heritage. Some Transitional styles may echo the English Manor (or Country) House décor. The interiors keep the original ideas found in grand English country houses of the past but updates Chippendale, Georgian, and Queen Anne furniture by increasing chair sizes for today's bodies and rooms.

Here are four characteristics of Transitional style:

- » Balanced curved and straight lines
- » Elegant profiles and simple silhouettes
- » Monochromatic and tone-on-tone palettes
- » Textural contrasts of wood, metal, glass, fabrics, furs, and fibers

Silhouettes tend to have a clean, simple look. Although the pieces may have decorative flourishes and details, these elements tend to be less intricate. Details matter, so look for great hardware.

Upholstery and other fabrics may stay true to Historic patterns. Some patterns may feature fresh, new colors that appeal today.

Transitional styles are often sold at the same places or sites as Traditional styles. Furniture retailers use the term *Traditional furniture* to refer to reproductions and “in the style of” pieces that pay homage to a Timeless style.

- » Understanding personal style
- » Figuring out your likes and dislikes
- » Defining your personal style
- » Adding a personal touch to your public-facing spaces

Chapter **10**

Developing Your Personal Style

Buying complete rooms-to-go is easy decorating — all the choices are made for you. Hiring a decorator to make your place look like a showroom is also easy — your designer will choose everything for you. Only one problem: It's not your style!

When you face the task of decorating — whether starting from scratch or redecorating after 20 years — you may not be sure where to start. The most important aspect of home decorating is figuring out what *you* want.

In this chapter, we guide you through the process of figuring out what style you can call your own. We also show you how to develop your own personal style. Decorating is about making a space reflect your style — not someone else's. This chapter shows you some little touches that make a huge difference in turning a house into your home. Finally, we end the chapter by showing you how to add your style to Airbnb or Vrbo rentals to make them more welcoming to your guests.

Discovering Personal Style

In Chapters 8 and 9, we discuss specific styles — Historic and Contemporary — each of which has a distinctive look and mood. Historic styles (see Chapter 8) tend toward the formal and conservative, while Contemporary styles (see Chapter 9) veer toward the informal and progressive. So, now that you’ve got some background in the evolution of design, you may be asking yourself: Which style would work best in my home?

The general style of your home should relate to your home’s architecture (or lack thereof), your region of the country, and a room’s function. We don’t often see an all-white Louis XV den in a Long Island split ranch, for example. (But, for the person who embraces that look and personalizes it, it’s possible. Achieving that look in very practical materials is even possible!) Whether you like the look of the past (the fancy or practical version) or the look of the now is a personal choice. How you make any broad category of style your own is your personal style.



WARNING

Designer Karim Rashid warns that style tends to be too much about surface appearances and not enough about how well your room functions. Don’t get so carried away about making your personal style statement that you forget about function, safety, comfort, and convenience. We’ve seen more than one design statement that had surface glitz but was completely unusable, hazardous, and ultimately, a disaster.

Defining personal style

In decorating, your personal style is the expression of your life. Your style reflects your education, experiences, travels, and (most important) your hopes, dreams, and wishes. It’s a look, a mood, a statement that grows out of personal needs.

Most of us have to fix something that we see as horribly wrong with our homes. How you inventively create an entryway where none existed, or make the most out of too little space, demonstrates your creativity at work. Personal style reveals your own unique solutions to these design problems.

Your personality is reflected in your personal style. Experts agree that every person has a unique personality and that your personality affects how you approach decorating your home. If you’re an introvert (shy and retiring), your level of internal stimulation is high, so you prefer a calming environment. Introverts feel better surrounded by subdued colors, textures, and pattern. If you’re an extrovert (outgoing and gregarious), your level of internal stimulation is low. Extroverts prefer a stimulating environment characterized by strong colors, textures, and patterns. (See the “Taste test” sidebar in this chapter for a quick way to determine if you’re an introvert or an extrovert.)



TIP

TASTE TEST

Don't know if you're an introvert or extrovert? Drop some lemon juice on your tongue. Is your mouth dry? Or are you salivating? Introverts tend to salivate to dilute the acidity and stimulatory effect of the lemon. Extroverts tend to keep a dry mouth — the acidity and external stimulation aren't a bother to them. So, next time you have a party and serve Lemon Drops (a slice of lemon, a dollop of sugar, and vodka), you can perform a quick and scientifically valid psychology test! In the meantime, you can test yourself before proceeding with your decorating plans.

Looking at a who's who of personal style

Over the past few years, many designers and so-called experts have written plenty about personal style without offering a whole lot of useful definition. Examples are often helpful.

Excellent examples include a few leading decorators known for their distinctively styled room settings. These style geniuses also design furnishings and accessories that almost anyone can acquire. When you come across their work in your favorite magazines, books, and TV shows, take a close look at the elements that constitute their personal, much publicized styles. You can follow the lead of these decorating stars:

- » **Jonathan Adler** adds whimsy to decoration and accessories. He has tons of licensed collections, including Now House on Amazon and partnerships with Kravet, H&M Home, and The Shade Store. He designs affordable home fashions, including washable rugs. His books on design will lift your spirits, too. His site, <https://jonathanadler.com>, showcases his vast collection of home furnishings products.
- » **Barbara Barry**, the “Queen of Serene,” has designed some of the most tranquil yet up-to-the-minute interiors for rock stars and movie stars. Her designs are noteworthy for their livable, Contemporary look that features plenty of grace notes and glamour. Her gracious designs can be seen at www.barbarabarry.com.
- » **Justina Blakeney**, artist, author, and designer, is the founder of a home decor brand, Jungalow, and creator of the Jungalow (Jungle + Bungalow) look. Her exuberant layering of pattern and color, along with a healthy dose of plants, makes her a huge influencer of style. Go to www.justinablakeney.com to see her joyous creations.

- » **Mario Buatta (1935–2018)**, dubbed the “Prince of Chintz,” layered floral pattern and classic style. His over-the-top luxury made him the designer of choice for people who treasure the English Manor House look. He decorated homes for stars like Mariah Carey. Books by Buatta and about Buatta are still in print. His legendary style lives on.
- » **Orlando Diaz-Azcuy** designs Minimalist-inspired interiors that incorporate elements of the romantic and exotic. His cutting-edge, ultra-luxurious take on Modernist design has made him a favorite for everyone from dot-com millionaires to celebrities. See more of his legendary work at <http://odada.net>.
- » **Joanna Gaines**, along with her husband, Chip, is known for launching the Magnolia Network (a cable TV network), and collaborations with Target, Anthropologie, and other major retailers. Her modern updates on the farmhouse style and endless energy — along with massive accessibility — has made her one of the most famous style setters of recent years. See her collections at <https://magnolia.com>.
- » **Larry Lazlo's** glamorous interpretations of Art Deco style and standout Modernist designs have earned him an international reputation. Lazlo's opulent Modernism is immediately noticeable in the fabrics, furniture, and art accessories he creates. Head to <http://larrylazlo.com> for his lines of furniture and furnishings.
- » **Ralph Lauren** remains the king of American style. His beddings raised the standards of quality; his furnishings and accessories scream quiet good taste. His flair for combining old-money American and English Country House styles and making them relevant, even for rap stars, has made him a star in his own right. A true hero of American design, his home furnishings products can be seen in stores and found online at www.ralphlaurenhome.com.
- » **Thomas O'Brien** has been known for bringing warmth and a touch of the classics to modern design since he founded his store, Aero, in 1992. His Vintage Modern line for Target brought his designs to the masses. O'Brien is a prolific product designer with collections at Century Furniture, Waterworks, Reed and Barton, and more. His store can be found at www.aerostudios.com.
- » **Adam Tihany's** trademark isn't so much a look as a feel — the feel of mega luxury. His amazing designs for some of the world's best restaurants have earned him an international reputation. He believes comfort comes first, whether it's Contemporary or Traditional. His global luxury looks can be seen at www.tihanydesign.com.
- » **Vicente Wolf** is the premier designer of Modernist-inspired interiors. His artful room settings seem to transcend time and place. His romantic, tailored rooms appear in numerous magazines, and he's consistently named one of

the top 100 interior designers year after year. One of the most influential designers of the late 20th century, he continues to influence the direction of interior design. Go to <https://vicentewolf.com> to see examples of his design.

Exploring Your Personal Style

You can easily feel overloaded with input from so many sources. You've heard so many "shoulds" and "oughts," "outs" and "ins," that you've never taken the time to decide something as basic as whether warm colors or cool colors make you feel better. Do the hot citrus colors of Provence turn you on, or is beige more beautiful? Are you torn between Country and other Contemporary rooms (see Figure 10-1)? If you don't know the answers to these questions, never fear: In this section, we give you the answers you need.

FIGURE 10-1: Choosing a personal style, such as Country, Modern, or Country Modern is about selecting a look that makes you feel happy and productive.

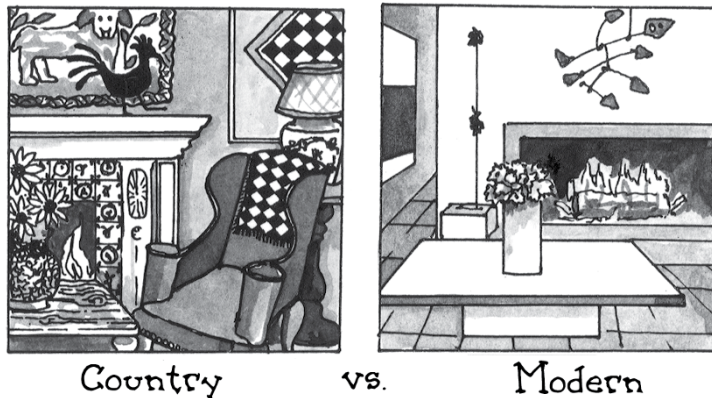


Illustration by Elizabeth Kurtzman



TIP

The numerous options you have can make choosing just one style — or even two or three — difficult. When you're having trouble making up your mind about which decorating styles you want to include in your home, knowing more about yourself may help.

Not absolutely sure why you like some styles, not others? Try some of the following techniques for developing your personal style:

- » **Continue looking for new decorating books.** Glance through the books in the bookstore and add the best to your bookshelf for ready reference.

- » **Experiment with color.** Tape a large piece of colored fabric or paper to the wall. Reenter the room, gauging your immediate response to the color. Then repeat the process with other colors. How does each color make you feel? Happy? Sad? Calm? Depressed? Better? Worse? Rate each color, beginning with the one that makes you feel best.
- » **Keep a file of all the magazine pictures you like.** Observe how elements work together to create a look. Note special architectural features (such as moldings, windows, fireplaces, and doors), surface treatments, furniture styles, color schemes, and other nuances.
- » **Look at department- and furniture-store room settings.** Take note of the relationships between furniture, backgrounds, and accessories that underscore a particular theme. Make a note of the ones that appeal strongly to you. What did you like best or least about the room? Getting a sense of your most extreme likes and dislikes is important.
- » **Make short lists of colors, furniture, and accessories that you like.** Take your lists with you on shopping trips so you don't become overwhelmed by all the options.
- » **Store all your notes and ideas together in a folder.** Review your ideas from time to time, especially after you've seen a showcase house or room that strongly appeals to you. You can adapt these things to your own rooms.
- » **Treat a small room (hallway, laundry, or playroom) as your "color lab."** If you want to experiment with a color, but you don't want to use your living room as a guinea pig, paint one or all four walls of a smaller room in the new color. Because paint is easily and inexpensively changed, if you decide you can't abide by that color, you can paint the walls a safe color again. All you've lost is a couple of bucks and a little energy (and look what you've gained!).
- » **Visit designer showcase houses for avant-garde ideas and daring pairings of furniture and accessories.** Jot down your likes, dislikes, and criticisms. Review your notes occasionally as you continue decorating and redecorating your home.



TIP



REMEMBER

Admitting that you're crazy about a certain color today doesn't mean you're stuck with it for life. Expect your personal style to evolve as your awareness grows, your knowledge builds, and your taste develops. Above all, don't be afraid to experiment (especially when you can do it easily and inexpensively).

Personalizing Your Approach

Every item you select for a room is an expression of your personal style. For example, if you love pattern, chances are, you'll seize every opportunity to express that love, starting with walls and including curtains and other fabrics. Wall covering offers up pattern galore, especially if you choose coordinating patterns.

If too much pattern isn't your taste, decide just how much is enough. Just a little pattern in accent furniture and accessories for relief from plain surfaces, can be plenty (see Figure 10-2).



FIGURE 10-2:
Art can be your favorite photograph — enlarged and hung with or without frame.

Photograph courtesy of the Joe Ruggiero Collection (www.joeruggiero.com)

Whether you like few or many accessories, personal expressions make your house feel like your home. If you're not sure how many accessories are enough, add just a few items at a time. You'll be able to tell when you've reached your limit by your level of emotional and intellectual satisfaction.



TIP

You may hesitate to add personal touches for several reasons. Perhaps you plan on selling your house in the near future, you're renting and the lease forbids you from painting the walls, or you want to ease into a personal style. We offer the following tips and techniques for adding exciting personal touches that only *seem* permanent, allowing change without penalty:

- » **Choose fabrics in your favorite color for draperies and upholstery.** These portable pleasures leave when you do.
- » **Display collections in a distinctive cabinet.** Forget about built-ins and choose a cabinet or other piece of furniture that both establishes your interests and enthusiasms and is a good traveler (a large piece of furniture made of parts that disassemble for easy transport).
- » **Leave large spaces neutral and satisfy your craving for powerful colors by using those colors in a smaller room.** You can easily repaint such rooms in an innocuous neutral tone.
- » **Look to accessories, such as area rugs, baskets, and slipcovers, for strong textures.** All these items are quick and easy to add or subtract when you move or improve.
- » **Make a color statement with a large, room-size rug and then repeat the colors throughout the room in accessories.** It's one background surface you can roll up and take with you to your next destination.
- » **Paint just one focal wall your signature color.** Painting one wall is easier than painting four. You can paint it white later, if necessary.
- » **Repeat your signature color around a neutral room or all through the house.** Add the color (such as tulip yellow or cornflower blue) by using various accessories, such as toss pillows, picture mats, and lamps.

If your work requires moving frequently, stick to the same neutral color for walls and background. Add important elements in your signature color that allow you to “grow” your portable collection of personal style elements over time. Rome wasn't built in a day, nor is personal style!

Branding Your Hospitality Spaces



TIP

More and more people are snapping up houses to turn into short-term rental spaces using platforms like Airbnb, Vrbo, and more. Some people even rent out spare bedrooms. Make your spaces photograph like a million bucks and get the rave reviews they deserve:

- » **Stick to one style throughout the house.** Consistent use of one design approach — like Bohemian, Contemporary, Farmhouse, Modern, or Victorian — will create a consistent experience of your space.
- » **Use color to convey your brand.** Create a livable color palette to use throughout the house. Vary a 60-30-10 color scheme (see Chapter 5) by switching out the dominant color with a secondary or accent color. Alter the mood using wall coverings and coordinating patterns. Use the same colors on your web page and social media to drive the message home.
- » **Add standout accessories or pieces.** You may be using a lot of IKEA for basics, but you can add spark by bringing in one outstanding splurge piece. These statement makers may be an unusual headboard, an iconic table, or a quirky armoire.
- » **Play up the location.** Bring home the sense of location through decorative themes. Themes related to the destination can show up in patterns, found objects and accessories, and even old photographs and old maps made into art. Be selective about your theme, ensuring that your choices seem high quality rather than common or cheap.
- » **Think function and multifunction.** Pick furniture like ottomans that can provide storage, seating, and a place to rest your feet. Invest in sofas and chairs that can convert into sleeping for extra guests. Provide places for beverages — storing bottles, mixing drinks, making coffee — by creating bar areas. Factor in extra little tables and surfaces for serving and drinking your concoction of choice.

- » Understanding furniture types
- » Choosing well-made case goods
- » Buying upholstered furniture
- » Upcycling furniture

Chapter 11

Finding Furniture

No matter where you source it (the Internet or a showroom), no matter its status (new or used), furniture is a major decorating investment. With more furniture-buying options than ever before, you'll want to know how to assess a piece of furniture for function, style, durability, and price. How can you tell if it's well constructed? Is it worth the price you're paying for it? Does it make sense to refinish or reupholster the piece? Should you upcycle a trashed-out cabinet or let it go? Should you browse at the showroom but order off the Internet to save money?

In this chapter, we answer all these questions and more. You find tips for buying furniture and see how to make an old piece of furniture seem like new again with a little creativity. This chapter has all the information you need to make your next furniture-buying excursion a fun adventure!

Sizing Up Different Furniture Types

Furniture comes *fully assembled* (preassembled, ready to use), *ready to assemble* (RTA; assemble it yourself), or sometimes *partially assembled* (some pieces need to be attached to other already assembled pieces).

Convenience and cost are two factors in choosing. If budget is a consideration, target your shopping to sites with RTA furniture. If you're in a time crunch,

getting a grasp on the resources needed to assemble furniture may push you toward fully or partially assembled. In this section, you get enough facts to make your decision.

Fully assembled furniture

Fully assembled furniture (sometimes called *preassembled* or *no assembly required*) comes delivered in one piece, ready for use. If you're having furniture delivered, you'll want to make sure how much service to expect. Occasionally, legs (or other parts) are unattached so the piece of furniture can fit through doors and hallways.

White-glove delivery (a type of delivery service for bulky, heavy, or delicate items) is available from retailers and websites. The delivery team gives special attention, care, and service, including unpacking, inspecting, assembling, and disposing of packing materials. (The term grew from the white gloves used to protect the item from fingerprints; often, delivery people don gloves and footies to protect your flooring, too.)



WARNING

Delivery surcharges may be added to the cost of standard delivery and processing charges. Remember to factor these costs (which can be several hundred dollars) into your budget.

You can find fully assembled furniture in a variety of price ranges. The prices vary based on the materials used in construction, construction techniques, and finishes used on the frame. You can generally figure that cost and quality correlate: the higher the cost, the higher the quality. But how can you be sure as a consumer?

Quality indicators in furniture

Do you wonder why some sofas cost \$500 and others cost \$5,000? High-quality furniture has some major characteristics that distinguish it from its low-quality counterparts, including the following:

- » **Good joints:** High-quality furniture is screwed or dowelled at the joints. Low-quality furniture has nailed, stapled, or visibly glued joints.
- » **Hardwood frames:** The frame is made of strong hardwoods. Typical hardwoods are ash, maple, and oak. Softwoods, such as pine, found in Country-style tables and cabinets, can't stand up to hard wear and tear as well as hardwoods can.
- » **High-caliber veneer:** Veneer is a thin layer of expensive wood (like mahogany) applied over the surface of a secondary wood. Veneers consist of five to seven thin layers of wood sandwiched together. Veneers are stronger than

plain wood of the same type, won't split or crack, and allow for matching the grain or decorative grain treatments.

- » **Perfect plywood:** Plywood is made from thin layers, or *plies*, of wood with wood grain rotated up to 90 degrees to one another and glued together. Even premium furniture uses plywood to construct or shape furniture. Plywood doesn't move like solid wood does. High-quality plywood has eight layers. Low-quality plywood is thin, brittle, and puncturable.
- » **Premium cushioning:** Thick, high-quality padding materials are used in high-quality upholstered goods so they hold their shape. Lower-cost furniture uses pieces of cut foam that compress and warp over usage and time.
- » **Protective finishes:** Multiple coats of finish cover the wood frame. More coats mean more durability.
- » **Quality hardware:** Decorative hardware and drawer pulls should look well made, with no obvious defects or uneven finishes. The hardware for drawer pulls, glide rails, and operating parts should be sturdy and easy to operate. Look for a protective finish for long wear on heavy-use hardware.
- » **Spring technology:** High-quality upholstered pieces use spring technology to support cushions. Along with high-quality cushioning material, this type of construction retains its shape over time and with usage. Low-quality upholstered furniture uses elastic bands stapled to frames.



TIP

Buy the best furniture you can afford if you want it to last for years. Otherwise, count on replacing it after less than ten years. A well-made sofa may need recovering, but the frame will be in good shape. Case goods (chests, dressers, and so on) may look more beautiful as they gain patina over the years. (Think antiques.)

You buy brand-new fully assembled furniture in furniture stores, designer showrooms, and online retailers and e-commerce sites. Some furniture you can pick up yourself. Other furniture must be shipped or delivered. Depending on the retailer or e-retailer, you may have to factor in wait time.

Recycle, upcycle, and repurpose furnishings

Pre-owned (used but usable) furniture is available at thrift shops. We've found treasures at garage, estate, and moving sales; flea markets; auctions; consignment shops; and charity outlets. Fine furniture retailers have clearance sales. And even to-the-trade (designer) showrooms may be open to anyone accompanied by a designer.

Some showrooms have a designer on call for such events. There are, of course, other online sources, including Facebook Marketplace. Don't buy in haste, though — shop around for the best prices before you buy. Online stores may offer

rock-bottom prices for high-quality pieces, but just be sure you know exactly what you want before you have that 8-foot sectional shipped cross-country. Shipping can be a significant cost, and returns are a pain. Be advised: Local retailers provide customer service; other sources may not.



TIP

If you live near a charity outlet that benefits from the castoffs of the wealthy (like the Church Mouse in Palm Beach), you can find some especially good deals. Get to know the people who run the shop and ask them to alert you to new arrivals. We knew an antique dealer who did this and resold her finds in her own shop for handsome markups!

You may buy furniture from these secondhand sources with the intention of refinishing and restoring your new find. Refinishing *case goods* furniture (chests, dressers, and other all-wood or laminate pieces) isn't as difficult as you may think. Paint and craft shops carry kits that make the job easier and faster. Upcycling furniture means you found an old cabinet somewhere — sometimes on the street — and upgraded it with a great paint job and nice hardware. Look for inspiration on YouTube from people with passions for upcycling vintage furniture.

Buying used upholstery depends on whether it's clean and serviceable or whether you need to re-upholster it. Before deciding to re-upholster a piece, investigate the cost of fabric and labor to recover it (call an upholsterer or two in your area). Unfortunately, fabric and labor can add up to more than the cost of the sofa or chair.



TIP

Take a tip from that beloved interior designer Sister Parish. This trendsetter designer made her odd assortment of kitchen chairs seem like an inspired gathering when she painted them all white. Use one color to unify different pieces in disparate styles so that they seem to belong together.

We painted an old brown ladder-back chair black to match a small black lady's desk. (Don't paint valuable antiques — the paint destroys the piece's resale value.) To transform a table or chest decoratively, paint it or cover it in a mosaic material. Imagination counts!

Ready-to-assemble furniture

RTA furniture (also known as assemble-it-yourself furniture) is furniture that you put together. It comes in all kinds of materials and styles. No waiting for delivery from your local store — carry it home in your automobile. Compact packaging keeps shipping and handling costs down, encouraging online purchasing. Most popular kinds of ready-to-assemble furniture are bookshelves, desks, and other office furniture. Pieces are designed so amateurs can assemble them.

Manufacturers say assembly is easy. That's not to say that some effort is not required. Do-it-yourselfers can opt for relatively inexpensive pieces that must be assembled and finished, spending a lot of time and investing considerable sweat equity.



WARNING

Even if you're a do-it-yourselfer, before you buy, find out how the piece is assembled. Some ready-to-assemble furniture requires more work than others. Check to see whether you have all the tools you need to finish the job. (Some manufacturers include the tools you need in the box, but others don't.) Know what you're getting into before you get your new furniture home and discover you actually need to hire a professional.



WARNING

Think twice before buying inexpensive, ready-to-assemble pine case goods that need finishing — especially those that require a lot of effort to finish. Think about where, when, and how often you'll use these pieces, as well as how long you want them to last. Cheap case goods don't stand up to hard use. You may not want to spend much time or waste money on them. Consider these pieces for short term use or as opportunities to experiment with creative designs in paint. You're not creating an heirloom.

Buying Case Goods

The term *case goods* refers to furniture that isn't upholstered and is made of wood or metal, such as dressers, tables, chests, armoires, and storage pieces. It's a term used more for commercial furniture than for residential furniture, and it's used more by people in the industry than by consumers.

The quality of the case goods plays a major part in determining the price. Factors like materials and craftsmanship affect the overall quality of case goods, including the following construction techniques:

- » **Joinery:** Wood pieces should be joined in either a *mortise and tendon* (one piece fits into a pocket on the other) or a *dovetail* (in which the pieces fit together like meshing gears). Then the pieces should be glued together for greatest strength.
- » **Heavy-duty glides:** Drawers should glide easily on heavy-duty glide rails, shouldn't wobble from side to side, and should never get stuck or run off the rails.
- » **Smooth sanding:** The insides of drawers should be smoothly sanded.

Websites often have detailed specifications. If you're old-school shopping in person, ask the salesperson to point out these and other excellent furniture construction features so you know what you're getting.



TIP

Good-quality case goods come in a range of prices (due to differing construction techniques, materials, and finishes), so if your budget is limited, you're not limited to cheap furniture. You may even find high-quality case goods in your favorite style *and* at a price you can afford.

Case goods come in a variety of materials. Take a look at the following tips on some different case-good materials:

- » **Glass:** Usually used as tops for tables and for shelving, the glass should be at least $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch thick for durability. For safety's sake, make sure you buy only *tempered* glass (which won't break into dangerous shards — check the label to make sure). Glass now comes in beautiful colors that make great accent pieces even in Traditional settings.
- » **Laminate:** A plastic surface bonded to particleboard substrate, laminates are durable and affordable, and they usually look very modern. You can find them in a variety of patterns and textures (some carry photographic reproductions of wood). Think of laminates as cost-effective (but never heirloom) furniture.
- » **Metal:** You can choose from a variety of metals, including chrome, stainless steel, wire, and wrought iron. Make sure the metal is smooth and has no sharp edges. If you live in a humid area, make sure new metals have a protective coating that prevents bubbling, peeling, and rusting. Follow manufacturer's care recommendations.
- » **Mosaic:** Once restricted to floors and walls, this art form of using small bits of tile, glass, or other interesting materials arranged decoratively is showing up more and more in furniture (especially fascinating tabletops). Mosaic materials include broken bits of china, stone, and shell; jewels; gold; silver; and bits of colored or stained glass.
- » **Plastic:** Make sure the plastic is smooth and without obvious seams. You can choose from many kinds of plastics; construction makes a difference between inexpensive and expensive plastics, such as Lucite. Expect to find plastic chairs and tables in many styles.
- » **Wicker:** Make sure that the wicker you buy is smoothly woven. The heavier the wicker, the better the quality. If a secondhand piece of wicker is unraveling, you can reglue it. Ask someone at your paint or hardware store to recommend the best adhesive for the job.

SPEAKING THE LANGUAGE OF WOOD

You can shop more easily in furniture shops if you know the language. Use these terms on your next furniture-shopping safari:

- **All wood:** This term means that all components are wood — solid, engineered, or a combination.
- **Engineered wood:** This term refers to wood made from slices of lumber (plywood), or chips and fibers remaining after a tree is milled into lumber, that are bonded together.
- **Hardwoods:** These trees — including ash, cherry, maple, oak, poplar, and walnut — lose their leaves in winter.
- **Medium-density fiberboard:** This material is made by breaking wood chips into fibers, mixing fibers with glue, and fusing the two under heat and pressure to produce boards. Fiberboard is generally stiffer and thicker than particleboard and is often covered in laminate or engineered wood.
- **Oriented strand board (OSB):** OSB is an engineered wood similar to particleboard. It's formed by adding adhesives and compressing layers of wood strands in specific orientations. Widely used, OSB is a versatile structural panel used in construction and furniture.
- **Particleboard:** This material is made by mixing wood chips and glue and pressing the mixture into boards. Particleboard is often thin and used on furniture backs and unseen parts of furniture.



WARNING

Double-check whether you're buying the wood you think you're buying. Many manufacturers stain less expensive woods to look like a pricey mahogany, cherry, or fruitwood. This cost-cutting, style-making solution lets you have the look of a rich wood at a more affordable price. Usually, the price of the furniture is an obvious clue — if you find a piece that looks like mahogany for a relatively low price, check to be sure what you're buying.

Finding Upholstered Furniture

You can find upholstered furniture at secondhand sources, but for sanitary reasons, you may want to strip off the old upholstery and padding down to the frame, and then rebuild with new padding and upholstery. If you plan to reupholster, choosing furniture without exposed wood frames can save a lot of money in labor

charges, because exposed wood frames are more difficult to cover. If upholstering is a skill you have, there's no limit on the pieces you may want to redo.

When buying upholstered furniture, keep the following points in mind:

- » High-quality upholstery frames are made of kiln-dried hardwood, as opposed to lower-quality frames, which are made of less durable pine. Because it's impossible to see a frame, manufacturers supply this information.
- » Steel coil springs should be hand tied (not machine clamped) in as many as eight different places where the adjoining coils and the frame meet, for greatest stability. Some newer technology uses flat S-curves. New furniture has this information on a hangtag. If it doesn't, ask the dealer.
- » Layers of cotton batting or polyester fiberfill, a quilted pillow of high-quality foam, and a layer of muslin should cover the steel coil springs. Ask a salesperson to explain the differences in foam quality.
- » You can specify the degree of softness of your sofa seat if you have it custom made. Otherwise, take the time to try out every sofa until you find the one that seems most comfortable. Expect sleeper sofas to be harder, more rigid, and heavier than other types of sofas.
- » Upholstery fabric should be upholstery-weight leather, tapestry, velvet, woven wool, or another heavy-duty material.

If you're choosing a fabric, look at fabrics available in all price ranges. Compare the *thread count* (threads per square inch). The greater the density (the higher the count and the more tightly woven the thread), the stronger the fabric. A quick test of density is to hold the fabric sample to the light. The less light that passes through, the more dense and, therefore, stronger the fabric is.

- » No law says your sofa and chairs must be the same style or covered in the same material. For unity, styles should work together and coverings should be coordinated.
- » For longevity, choose neutral-colored upholstery in durable materials. Neutral colors never go out of style. And it's easy to freshen the look by adding a dash of color and pattern in new pillows.
- » If you choose a distinctive pattern (such as a bold stripe) for your sofa and chairs, the pattern should match at the seams and align on the pillows and skirt (if there is one) to create an unbroken pattern.
- » Sofa pillow edges should align smoothly, without gaps between pillows or the sofa back and arms.



TIP

UNDERSTANDING UPHOLSTERY-SPEAK

When shopping for upholstery, the American Furniture Manufacturers Association (AFMA) suggests using the following terms so that you and the salesperson are speaking the same language:

- **Corner blocks:** Small blocks of wood used to strengthen and keep aligned the corners of seat frames. Blocks are glued or screwed (or both) into place.
- **Down:** Soft, fluffy feathers used in seat cushions for added plushness. Used alone, they mash down when sat on and must be plumped back into position every time. Having to plump them can get old, so down is most often used to top off other materials (like foam) that have position memory and don't need constant fluffing.
- **Flexible polyurethane foam (FPF):** Almost all upholstered furniture uses this shape-keeping, comfortable, under-cover material. The higher the density, the more durable the foam and the more expensive the cushion or sofa.
- **Synthetic fibers:** Most upholstery fabric is man-made and extremely durable, and it often looks like natural fibers and materials. Most popular are acetate, acrylic, nylon, polypropylene, and rayon.
- **UFAC:** The Upholstered Furniture Action Council (<https://ufac.org>) is a voluntary, upholstery industry, safety organization formed to create manufacturing standards to reduce flammability in upholstery.

- » Make sure the frame of the furniture is sturdy. The sofa shouldn't flex in the middle when it's lifted by the ends.
- » All exposed wood parts should be smooth, without any discernible air bubbles (indicating a poorly cured varnish) or blemishes (indicating poor-quality wood).

Working Furniture Magic



TIP

Decorating old or unfinished furniture lets you make a creative statement. Take a look at the following decorating tips and try some out on *your* furniture:

- » **Consider new uses for old furniture and unique items.** We bought an old combination radio/phonograph in a beautifully veneered cabinet for \$5 from the Salvation Army. Now we use it as an elegant foyer console. The \$50 china cabinet with a pagoda bonnet holds framed family photographs (elegantly, in



TIP

the living room!). Try using drums as tables; bunch together a trio of drums and use them as individual coffee tables.

- » **Create an instant slipcover by throwing a king-size sheet, quilt, or bedspread over an unsightly sofa.** Tie it in place with rope or grosgrain ribbon.
- » **Decorate an old chest for a teenager's room with discarded license plates.** Garage sales and junk stores are good sources. Just decide where to add them. Nail them into place.
- » **Decoupage an old dresser or dressing table with motifs cut from wallpaper.** Safeguard with a finishing glaze or coat of polyurethane.
- » **Dress up a plain-Jane, upholstered side chair.** Get out the trusty hot-glue gun to attach interesting *gimp* (an ornamental braid or cord), fringe, or other trim along the bottom of the seat.
- » **Faux-paint old wooden furniture.** Paint stores have rows of booklets describing various techniques step-by-step. They also carry kits. Everything you need is right there in store.
- » **Individualize dining room chairs for your kids.** Paint mismatched chairs bold colors (all the same or coordinating colors). Stencil your kids' names on the chair backs or add a motif. Craft shops have small glue-on toys, animals, numbers, and initials.
- » **Paint a wooden chair with an interesting shape different colors and patterns, like a Victorian house.** For color combination ideas, pick the colors already in your scheme. Some paint companies put out booklets of historic color combinations — check these out for instant inspiration.
- » **Paint vertical stripes on an old or RTA chest or nightstand.** All you need is tape (you can buy special masking tape at the paint store), a brilliant color or two, and a very steady hand wielding a paintbrush. Measure off the stripes using a ruler and a pencil to make light marks.
- » **Take a tip from Colonial homemakers — cover tables in flat-weave rugs.** Dhurries, needlepoints, or chain-stitch rugs can transform tables into desks and display areas for framed family photos.
- » **Use a deep, glass-fronted china cabinet to hold a small TV or serve as a minibar in the living room.** Punch a hole in the back to slip through the wires for any appliances. Then display glasses and ice buckets in it.
- » **Use pillows to convert lumber into a sofa of sorts — outside or inside.** Use flatter pillows for seats and backs and fluffier ones for decoration and added comfort.

TRENDS IN OUTDOOR FURNISHING

Merge the comfort of indoor living with the fun of the outdoor lifestyle. Designed for fun and function (and sometimes work), outdoor furniture is increasingly looking like indoor furniture. Here's what to look for when buying outdoor pieces:

- **Accent pieces:** Small side tables, plant stands, stools, and ottomans can add lots of functionality and flair. Look for weatherproof materials and coatings for outdoor settings.
- **Bistro chairs and table sets:** Turn your patio or backyard into a Parisian-style experience. Paired with an outdoor rug, these two to four chairs plus small table are perfect for casual dining or beverage service.
- **Egg chairs:** Designed for outdoors, a hanging patio egg chair comes on a stand that makes it a swing. An egg chair with legs has all the style of the hanging egg chair but is easier to get in and out of.
- **Firepits:** Great for roasting marshmallows or heating up on a chilly night, firepits come in various sizes, styles, and price points. Some firepits are basic ways to burn logs. Others are integrated into massive surrounds that let you use them for serving food and drinks. Look for a protective cover. Some firepits use propane tanks or can be fitted to your natural gas line.
- **Sofas and daybeds:** Add luxury to your outdoor seating with hardwood framed upholstered sofas and daybeds. Protective finishes and weathered teak stand up to sun and rain year-round. Look for outdoor upholstery with ultraviolet (UV) protection.
- **Tables:** Cocktail tables, coffee tables, dining tables, and high-tops are must haves for entertaining. You can never have too many tables if you have lots of seating and guests mingling.
- **Umbrellas for patios and outdoors:** Umbrellas provide flexible sunshade. Umbrella shapes include round, square, and rectangular. Stands come in varying styles and finishes, but look for rustproof finishes.
- **Water-resistant textiles:** Quick-drying, UV-resistant, easy-to-clean, outdoor fabrics can be used on seat cushions and pillows.

4

Designing Backgrounds

IN THIS PART . . .

Define function, set the style, and add value to your home by focusing on your walls.

Give your floors the attention they deserve.

Give your ceilings the right decorative look.

Find stylish solutions to control light and get some privacy with your window treatments.

Kick your lighting up a notch.

- » Respecting your house's architectural bones
- » Using great wall coverings to create style

Chapter 12

Enhancing Walls

Wall trends change over time. What was out of style last decade is back in style this decade, usually with a fresh twist. Trends change from year to year, but great wall design and personal style never seem dated. Think of your walls as big opportunities for amping up style. What sort of background works for your space?

In this chapter, you find out how to create style by treating your walls as a creative canvas. Consider your house's style: Do you want to stick with tradition or radically depart from it? You'll find all the guidelines to help you decide. Finally, we cover the many possibilities for transforming any wall.

Decorating with Architecture in Mind

Your personal style may be rooted in Traditional style or grounded in Contemporary, but when it comes to your walls, a lot depends on your space's architecture. Current home builder styles seem to blend the two approaches, borrowing elements of Traditional and Contemporary to suit the way we live today. Nonetheless, your home's basic architectural approach will play a strong role in how you design your wall treatment.

Traditional walls tend to form square or rectangular rooms with 90-degree angles at the corners. Doors and windows are sometimes arranged symmetrically so

there are equal amounts of wall space around the wall or door. Traditional walls don't have to be white, beige, gray, or whatever color the builder painted them, but the right white will make the space impeccable!

Throughout your home, you can introduce diversity with color, pattern, and texture (see Chapters 5, 6, and 7, respectively).

Contemporary open floor plans feature public spaces (kitchens, living rooms, dining rooms, and media rooms) as one big great room. With the COVID-19 pandemic, however, people came to see the downsides of open spaces: namely, uncontrollable noise, easy distractions, and lack of privacy. Adding partial walls, bringing in standing screens, and creating zones became a trend.

If you have mostly open space and only a few rooms for bedrooms and hallways, your Contemporary floor plan may pose a challenge with wall treatments. To further complicate matters, some walls may be partial walls and others may be oddly joined together.

To create a sense of flow, some Contemporary styles use the same color for the whole space. All white or neutrals (like gray, beige, or sand) for walls, floors, and ceilings is not uncommon. If your house came this way, stick with this streamlined situation if you like. Then bring in the excitement through furniture, art, and accessories.



TIP

Traditional houses have opportunity for lots of wall treatments. If you're a decorating daredevil jumping at the chance to paint walls a different color, unify your scheme with moldings and trim in the same color (for example, crisp white or deep charcoal). This strategy will keep your whole-house scheme on track. Traditional homes feature trim and molding, usually in default white.



TIP

Contemporary spaces can handle variation, too. If you're working in Contemporary open spaces and walls with no trim, and you can use a repeated accent color to tie together focal walls and color-blocked areas with other spaces. You can also get a sense of unified space by using the same flooring throughout.



REMEMBER

If you want to create a unified look, the background (walls, floors, and ceilings) should harmonize. Make sure they have the same mood and level of formality.

Traditional wall design

Typically, Traditional rooms are boxlike, with a few doors and small windows. These rooms have plenty of wall space against which to place furniture. Often, the architect creates a focal wall by including a fireplace, a decorating plus. (See Chapter 4 for more on focal points.)

The walls can be broken into three areas: the lower wall, a mid-height chair rail, and the top of the wall. Traditionalists usually panel the lower part of the wall, paint the chair rail a contrasting color, and then add paint or paper to the top. Traditional color distribution calls for a dark color on the bottom, a medium color in the middle, and a light color on the top.

If your Traditional room is spacious and the walls are high, you can create a sensational room with paneling and a dramatic or bold wall color. Not all Traditionally inspired rooms must use chair rails. Some new twists on Traditional play with proportions of paneling, especially in high-ceilinged spaces.

To make a Traditional room seem Contemporary, use any of these three techniques:

- » **Use Contemporary wall covering.** Paper the wall from the floor to the ceiling in a Contemporary textured or patterned wallpaper. You can add a chair rail, skip the chair rail, or paint the existing chair rail a background color.
- » **Flip the color scheme.** This technique is perfect for high-ceilinged rooms! Use a dark color paint or wall covering on the top portion and use a lighter paint or wall covering near the floor up to the chair rail.
- » **Go minimalist.** Paint all the walls the same color. Paint the chair rail or molding in a high-gloss finish of the same color.



WARNING

Traditional decorating doesn't work well with restless diagonal lines. Avoid overly aggressive graphics, wall coverings, or chevron-patterned planks.

CREATING WALL MAGIC

Put a spell on your walls and magically make problems vanish. Consider these top decorating wizardries:

- **Alter proportions.** Cut too-high walls down to size by dividing them into three horizontal color-blocked bands.
- **Lower a ceiling.** Paint ceiling a dark color and crown moldings a contrasting color. Or bring the ceiling color onto the molding and apply to the top of the wall a few inches.
- **Apply banding.** Shrink a too-tall wall by banding with two rows of molding (use wood or metal). Paint areas between the bands contrasting colors.

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- **Go graphic.** Design an oversize graphic using simple geometrics and execute it in bold contrasting colors.
- **Give short walls a lift.** Make walls under 8 feet seem higher by using one light color from baseboard to ceiling.
- **Make Traditional walls seem tall.** Go with wainscot (wood paneling) and a narrow chair rail. Above the chair rail, paint everything in the same light color and *finish* (level of gloss). (High gloss has been trending lately.)
- **Amp up style and perceived height.** Above the chair rail, choose a light-color, low-contrast narrow-stripe pattern with a matching glossy paint for chair rail and paneling.
- **Stretch any short wall to new heights.** Add vertical lines from the floor to the ceiling with striped wall covering, vertical panels, or *beadboard* (narrow plank paneling).
- **Be square(ish).** Transform an awkward rectangular room into a graceful square. Paint shorter end walls a dark, warm color and leave the two longer side walls a (relatively) light color. End walls seem to advance toward the room's center to make the space less rectangular.
- **Find a focus.** Make a square room seem less static by painting one focal wall a brilliant color. For small rooms, keep your palette light and cool, such as an apple green and crisp white. For large rooms, go for warmer, darker colors, such as Venetian red against gold.
- **Keep the (visual) peace.** Paint walls and mechanical devices (vents, electrical panels) the same color to create a seamless look. (You may want to remove the vents to spray-paint, or special-order custom-colored vents for a more sophisticated look.)
- **Call out molding.** Transform a dull room by outlining moldings in a complementary, glossy color.
- **Shut the door (visually).** Eliminate the feeling that a room has too many doors by painting the doors and trim the same color as the walls. (Wood and white doors that stand out like sore thumbs in any room — large or small — are best painted to blend with the wall.)
- **Accentuate doors.** Paint walls a neutral color and paint doors a strong contrasting color. Black works magic! Or try antique (pick up an antique color kit to achieve this effect).
- **Make unattractive trim vanish.** Paint unsightly trim around the doors and windows the same color as the walls but in a higher level of gloss to withstand wear.

Contemporary wall design

Contemporary rooms can be irregularly shaped and have many doors or arches, huge windows, and very little wall space for furniture placement and art arranging.



WARNING

Large spaces can look like an airport or hotel lobby if not handled properly. Skillful furniture arrangement along with the right style can make these spaces warm (see Chapter 22 for tips on arranging living rooms).



REMEMBER

When you're dealing with *window walls* (exterior walls devoted almost entirely to windows) or sliding glass doors, take the view into account. Why do you see out the window? Relate or contrast your interior walls with the exterior walls.

Walls in Contemporary houses can vary. Walls can be short (like in Mid-Century ranch houses with 8-foot or lower ceilings). Walls can sometimes be two stories high. In some houses, walls can go to both extremes.



WARNING

Texture affects the way a wall looks and makes you feel. A great example is mirror — depending on what it reflects, a mirror can make walls seem light and airy or dark and heavy. Stones and boulders make a wall heavy — how heavy depends on the stone's color and texture.

Make sure that a textured wall (fieldstone, for example) doesn't look heavier than the floor, creating a sense of instability. For example, a stone wall against a bleached-white plank floor could look top-heavy, upsetting the sense of balance.

Considering Your Material Options

An abundance of materials is available for walls. This section gives you a brief look at old favorites and their special virtues. Consider using them in new ways. Combine materials to create walls with the look you're after.

Ceramic tile and natural stones

Ceramic tile has been a natural choice for bathrooms ever since the Spanish flu pandemic of 1918, when sanitizing needs popularized the material. Increasingly, ceramic tile is also a popular choice for kitchens with Old World or Vintage charm. Use tiles in small areas, such as *backsplashes* (the space between the sink and wall-hung cabinets), and entire wall areas (floor to ceiling).

Tiling walls makes good sense in areas that must stand up to heavy traffic and frequent cleaning. Kitchens and baths, rear halls, and mudrooms look great tiled.

Porcelain tile has color throughout, making it an excellent choice for heavy-wear areas. Porcelain's *vitreous* (glasslike) nature makes it nonabsorbent so it's stain-proof and sanitary. Glazed and porcelain tile come in an endless array of colors, patterns, textures, and sizes.

Glass tile, an ancient material, has been very popular (again) the past 20 or more years. It looks like a dressy material that's acceptable for more public areas in your house. Available in a glorious array of colors, patterns, and textures, glass lets light pass through and sometimes refracts light, making it one of the liveliest of materials for any surface. Generally, small tiles are used in Traditional settings; large tiles, in Contemporary rooms.



TIP

Marble, a fine material in its polished smooth-surface state, is usually seen on walls and floors in formal settings. Marble takes on a rustic look when it's being *tumbled* (placed in a rotating bin with an abrasive that roughs it up). In Old World-style kitchens, tumbled marble (treated with a sealant that works to keep it clean) adds sophisticated and charming rusticity.

Fabrics

Textiles (cloth fabrics) as wall treatments were rediscovered when interior designers looking at velvet-covered castle walls had an aha moment. Suddenly, they were showing the rest of us how to cover walls floor to ceiling in our favorite fabric.

Any number of fabrics are great for walls. Some designers and decorators go the extra mile and *tent* (cover) the ceiling in the same or a coordinating fabric. Consider a fabric for walls and tenting the ceiling in almost any bedroom, bathroom, or powder room. Contemporary living rooms are not a likely candidate for fabric walls and ceilings.



WARNING

Don't use fabric-covered walls in kitchens or anywhere near a heat source, including lamps that get hot. They could be a fire hazard.

Generally, fabrics are mounted on a backing material that makes them easier to install (by professionals). Fabric is treated with a protective coating that makes it easier to maintain.

Do-it-yourselfers latched onto sheets as a quick and easy way to cover bedroom walls. Sheets and other wide swaths of fabric (including 54-inch-wide materials

found in bolts at fabric shops and showrooms) are often gathered or sheared at the top and bottom on curtain rods that are attached to the wall.

Heavier fabrics can be gathered on wood slats and then screwed or nailed into the wall. Sometimes, people attach a narrow piece of wood at the top and bottom and staple the fabric onto the strip. A quick and easy but perhaps not so elegant method is to gather and staple fabric directly onto the wall (we don't recommend this approach).

Fabric-covered walls are romantic. They're also one way to cover walls ruined by stains and wear and tear. If you're renting, you may want to attach fabric in the quickest and easiest way for removing and taking with you.



TIP

Tenting bedrooms and bathrooms is a romantic, practical, and sometimes inexpensive way to disguise disfigured walls and ceilings.

Favorite fabrics for walls are velvet, linen, silk, cotton chintz, and cotton corduroy (and their synthetic look-alikes). Also consider nontraditional fabrics like cotton flannel. Some fabrics, like corduroy, don't drape very well, so forget tenting with them unless you love a challenge. Silk and silk-look synthetics are easy to work with. You can find these fabrics at most big craft stores.



REMEMBER

Fabrics come in standard widths: dressmaker (35 inch), drapery (45 inch), and upholstery (54 inch). To measure fabric for wall covering, follow these three steps:

- 1. Determine the number of widths.**

Figure out how many widths you'll need per wall by placing a full 35-, 45-, or 54-inch-wide piece in the center of the wall, and then adding widths to either side to cover the wall. Deduct 1 inch from each side to allow for cutting away selvage and room for a $\frac{5}{8}$ -inch seam. (Think of 54-inch-wide fabric as 52-inch-wide fabric.) This prevents awkwardly placed seams or motifs.

- 2. Measure your wall's height and translate that figure into yards.**

Divide the number by three (3 feet = 1 yard).

- 3. Multiply widths by yards.**

Multiply the number of widths by the number of yards for the total yardage needed to cover your wall or walls. For example, a 13-foot-wide by 12-foot-high wall needs three widths of 54-inch fabric, multiplied by 4 yards, for a total of 12 yards of fabric.

Mirror

Mirrors are marvelous decorating elements. Large mirrors visually expand small spaces by seeming to double them. All mirror reflects light, adding liveliness to an interior. They play back whatever is in front of them. Give mirror something attractive to reflect, though — without that, the mirror will seem deadly dull.

Use mirrors in wall-to-wall, floor-to-ceiling applications in Contemporary rooms. Mirroring a wall above a *wainscot* (wood paneling) or *dado* (the area below a chair rail) in a Traditional small or medium-size dining room, provides brilliant nighttime entertainment for diners. Mirrored walls are very “Hollywood glam,” a look that never seems to go out of style.

If you want to mirror a whole wall in a Traditional setting, consider using mirror tiles with beveled edges. Beveled edges give the tiles a richer, heavier look. Do-it-yourselfers find that large mirror tiles and mirror strips (in various widths and lengths) are easier to handle. Both are available in plain or beveled edges. Some feature peel-and-stick adhesive.

Paint

Paint offers so much for so little cost. You can choose any color, starting with the thousands offered by leading paint companies. If you don’t see the one you want, just take an example of the color you want (maybe your favorite shirt) with you to the paint store, and the store’s computer can match it perfectly.



TIP

Paint-matching gadgets that connect to your smartphone via Bluetooth can make color matching a snap. Datacolor ColorReader, Color Muse, Nix Mini, Palette Pico, and Sherwin-Williams ColorSnap Match Pro are among the most widely used.

Many paint companies have developed collections of colors that work separately or in combinations. Labeling them with romantic, historic, or exciting location names hint at a way you may use them. But no color police will stop you from using a seashore collection in your suburban ranch house.

Surprisingly, among all those paint chips and collections brochures in store, you may not see just the right color you need for your project. No problem. Look for help at the paint store with a computerized method for selecting just the right color (and color scheme). (For some tips, check out Chapter 5.)

Want a texture along with the right color? That’s easy. New faux finishes and special decorative effects come in kits, complete with instruction booklets (see Figure 12-1).

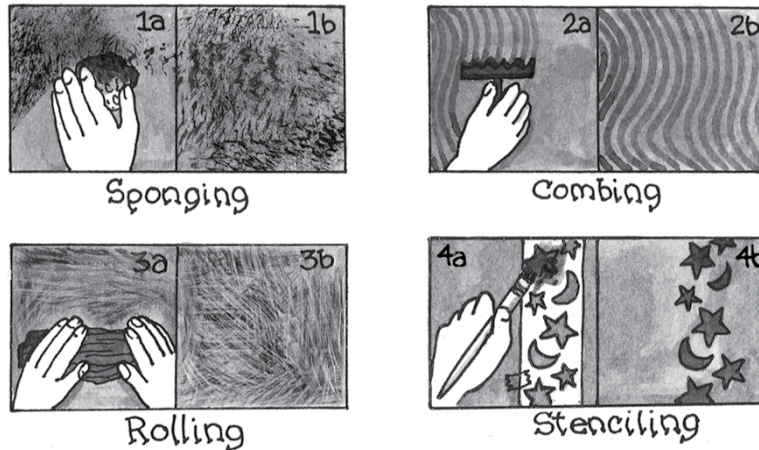


FIGURE 12-1:
You can apply
paint in a number
of different ways
to achieve very
different effects.

Illustration by Elizabeth Kurtzman



TIP

If yours is a high-traffic household, pick a finish that's both beautiful and washable. Paint technology is always improving, so that one coat of quality paint over a tinted primer may be sufficient. You may have to pay a little more, but you save in labor.

The sidebar "Generating special effects with paint" provides suggestions for using paint in creative ways.

GENERATING SPECIAL EFFECTS WITH PAINT

Paint, the least expensive wall covering, is also the most versatile. Try these special decorative paint effects to enliven your walls:

- **Classic faux finishes:** Faux paint finishes have never been more popular. They include sponging, ragging, rolling, combing, feathering, stippling, spattering, masking, marbleizing, and tortoise and bamboo finishes. All are do-it-yourself projects, and kits and instructions are readily available at home improvement shops.
- **Other faux finishes:** If traditional faux finishes aren't your cup of tea, you can make a painted wall look like denim, chambray, linen, suede, or antiqued leather. Also, consider the historic crackle or aging finishes, or unique finishes that simulate such sophisticated textures as gray flannel, duchesse satin, and river rock. Kits, how-to booklets, and videos are available in paint stores and home centers.
- **Stenciling:** Stenciling is a classic art form that seems to grow more popular every year. It's a charming touch to Colonial, Early American, Country, and Romantic rooms. And it's easy to do, even for amateurs. Books and kits abound (you'll find them at craft shops).

Stucco

Stucco (a textured plaster) is a great traditional finish for all types of Country, Old West (Santa Fe or Taos), and Old World–style walls. Ask your paint dealer about stuccos that come premixed, ready to spread from the can. Make sure the stucco or plaster you choose is made for do-it-yourselfers if you plan to apply it yourself.

One of the most beautiful and glossiest plaster finishes is Venetian Plaster Spatula Stuhhi. It requires 12 to 14 hours to dry and is not washable; a finishing coat is advised. For any stucco, practice your spreading technique on a piece of plywood or gypsum wallboard so you get the precise texture you’re aiming for.

Wallpaper and wall coverings

Most wallpaper really isn’t paper — it’s vinyl or vinyl-coated, so it’s tougher, longer wearing, and washable. Some unwashable wall coverings are grass cloth, silk, linen, or other kinds of material. Visit the Wallcoverings Association’s website (www.wallcoverings.org) for lots of facts about wall coverings.

No other material does what a well-designed wall covering does for any room: It introduces unique pattern, color, and texture simultaneously. The range of patterns is so vast that you’re certain to find what you want!

And don’t forget murals! Landscape murals add visual depth to interiors, making them wonderful for small rooms and ideal for hallways, bathrooms, or powder rooms. Many wall coverings come pre-pasted for easier installation. The revival in interest in murals is astounding. Some websites will even convert your photography or images into wall coverings.

If you go online to browse, you can save yourself time. Order samples for about \$5 to \$10 to see what the wallpaper looks like in your room. Don’t skip this step, especially if you’ve never seen the paper in real life.

If you go to the store, give yourself time to search through the enormous number of wall-covering books (allow at least an hour). Most home improvement stores carry popular wall coverings. Specialty wall-covering stores carry a greater range of products, including designer lines.

You may need a specific wall-covering pattern to solve a difficult decorating problem. Here are some examples of decorating problem solved through wall coverings:

» Create dimension with a tiny geometric on a light background in a small attic room.

- » Cozy up a big bedroom with a large floral pattern.
- » Visually furnish a small hallway that needs personality.
- » Fake the look of leather, carved wood, or ornate plaster with paintable embossed wallpaper.



TIP

Table 12-1 offers handy estimates for the number of wallpaper (or other wall covering) rolls you can expect to use in your room.

TABLE 12-1

Estimating Typical Wallpaper Rollage

Room Size	Rolls for Room with 8-Foot Ceiling	Rolls for Room with 9-Foot Ceiling	Rolls for Covering Ceiling
8 x 10 feet	9	10	3
10 x 12 feet	11	12	4
12 x 12 feet	12	14	5
14 x 20 feet	17	19	9
16 x 20 feet	18	20	10

Wood

Wood paneling enriches walls. Wood prices have skyrocketed since the 2020s, however, so be prepared to make an investment!

Ready-made paneling ranges in style and price. Extraordinarily expensive, solid wood, traditional, English-style paneling and French *boiserie* (a fancy carved and decorated wood paneling) are the most sophisticated when they're the real deal (but they're also extremely expensive).

Knotty pine planks and 4-x-8-foot sheets come in a wide variety of woods (and wood looks). Paneling is available in a huge variety of natural woods that lend their colors and textures to your scheme.

Painted finishes in contemporary and antique colors if not available can become a do-it-yourself project. Don't be afraid to upcycle plywood. Plywood doubled as paneling in a once-decrepit California cabin that was rescued, renovated, and featured in a decorating magazine.

Reclaimed barnboard is wonderful for Country-style rooms. Reclaimed wood from old barns can also be pricey but worth it if you're going for a look. Sometimes it's free for the taking. Just ask the farmer or landowner for their permission to tear down a crumbling barn for its boards! (You can build a nice side hustle out of reclaiming and reselling wood. Nowadays, you may need to make a cash offer for the old wood, too.)



TIP

Mixing a little borax and water and spritzing it on with a spray bottle will wipe out bugs and their babies. Ask your builder or carpenter about the proper way to debug recycled wood before bringing it into your house. You can also find out about how to refinish or treat the wood on the Internet. Ask your local paint dealer for suggestions about refinishing old barnboard. (We don't pretend to be wood experts, but we've worked with people who are passionate about using reclaimed wood for building "rustic ruins.")

Shop around for the paneling that adds the look you want. Generally, paneling with raised grounds and trims, which look like boxes, is dressier. Plank styles, with vertical grooves, looks casual. You may like paneling used as wainscot, usually about 30 inches high in Early American, Victorian, and Country-style rooms and even higher in Arts and Crafts interiors.



TIP

When shopping for wood wall coverings, keep these pointers in mind:

- » Paneling comes in 4-x-8-foot sizes for easy, efficient installation.
- » Beadboard resembles tongue-and-groove planks that feature a distinctive thin vertical stripe. It's particularly good-looking in Cottage-style interiors. It can be used in just about every room in the house, beginning with the front entry and ending with the kitchen. (You can even apply beadboard to ceilings.)
- » Real planks — especially knotty pine — are popular wall surfaces. They're great for Cottage and Lodge interiors, dens, and family rooms.
- » Wood moldings create designs on walls that simulate or enhance paneling. You can paint these moldings to blend or contrast with painted walls or stain them to match wood paneling or planks.

- » Looking at your hard-flooring options
- » Putting something soft underfoot
- » Reshaping rooms visually with new floors

Chapter **13**

Finding Flooring

Flooring adds style and comfort underfoot while concealing structural material, air ducts, and underfloor heating. Flooring must be safe and non-slippery, too, and fit the needs of the space, especially in wet areas like kitchens and baths. Plus, flooring has to hold up to general wear and tear for decades to come. With all the flooring types, materials, and styles, it's easy to get floored by all the choices in flooring retailers, home improvement stores, and online sellers.

In this chapter, you find out about the most popular materials for flooring like wood, stone, tile, and floor coverings like synthetics, carpeting, and rugs. You see some advantages and disadvantages of each material. Finally, you find out about ways you can decorate with flair.

Installing Hard Surfaces

Want a floor to last? Hard-surface flooring holds up to wear and tear. Available in range of natural materials, including wood, stone, and tile, and synthetic materials like vinyl, flooring ramps up style and provides function.

Walking on wood

Wood flooring is available in two forms: *traditional* (also known as *real wood* or *solid wood*) and *engineered* or *prefinished* wood. These two types have their advantages and disadvantages, so you'll need to get the facts before pulling the trigger on your flooring purchase.

Traditional hardwood flooring is a single plank from a hardwood species like cherry, maple, oak, or walnut. Hardwoods are common favorites because they wear well and come in a range of light to dark finishes. Brazilian cherry, an especially fine hardwood, is very dressy looking. Exotic hardwoods, such as santos mahogany, wenge, and bamboo, are becoming popular. Bamboo doesn't hold up well in wet areas, but you can use it in living, dining, and family rooms.



WARNING

Softwoods can be used for flooring, but they don't hold up as well as hardwoods. Pine, a favorite in Country-style interiors, is a softer wood in a medium color. Pine shows wear and doesn't refinish as well as hardwood. Some people like to install pine flooring because it's relatively inexpensive. For old-fashioned charm, you can paint or stencil it. (Painted or stenciled surfaces should have protective coat of polyurethane.) If you like the lived-in look, this wood is for you.

Here are some five facts to consider when selecting wood flooring:

- » **Cost:** When this book was published, the cost of the average hardwood ran from \$6 to \$15 per square foot (including installation). High-end woods ranged from \$12 to \$23 per square foot installed. Installation usually involves finishing, trim, and removal of the old floor. Expect prices to continue to increase, especially for imported woods.
- » **Life span:** Real wood has a long life span of several 30 to 100 years, because it's solid all the way through. Floors can be lightly sanded and refinished several times, with care.
- » **Moisture toleration:** Hardwood can be water-resistant, but it's not waterproof. Never wet mop or let water stand on the surface.
- » **Plank sizes:** Standard sizes vary in width from about 2¼ inches to 4 inches (wider planks are rare) and in length from 12 to 84 inches. Thickness is about ¾ inch.
- » **Installation:** Hardwood flooring is installed by nailing planks onto a subflooring. Professionals should install the flooring because of the level of skill involved. Most brick-and-mortar retailers factor in those costs when you purchase. If you're purchasing online, you'll have to find a local installer.

Engineered (prefinished) hardwood flooring has a thin layer of hardwood laid over a high-quality plywood core. Engineered wood has some advantages over real wood, and some disadvantages:

- » **Cost:** Engineered wood is about half the cost of hardwood. In 2022, prices ranged from \$4 to \$7 per square foot for average woods. Low-end products went for \$3 to \$5 per square foot, and high-end cost from \$8 to \$13 per square foot.
- » **Life span:** With proper maintenance, engineered wood can last up to 30 years. You can't refinish engineered hardwood like hardwood because the layer of wood is very thin. However, unlike hardwood floors, individual planks can be easily replaced, thanks to the click-and-lock installation method.
- » **Stable construction:** Engineered hardwood resists warping and its underlying plywood structure stabilizes planks to prevent expansion and contraction.
- » **Plank sizes:** Typically, thinner than their hardwood counterparts, engineered wood planks are about $\frac{3}{8}$ to $\frac{9}{16}$ inch thick (compared with $\frac{3}{4}$ inch for hardwood). Planks can run up to 7 inches wide (compared with 4 inches for hardwood). Plank length ranges from 12 to 60 inches.
- » **Installation:** Engineered wood can be installed over existing tile or concrete and *below grade* (in basements), and fewer tools are required to install it than are required for hardwood.



TIP

Concerned about the sustainability and eco-friendliness of woods? For more facts about wood, go to the website of the American Hardwood Information Center at www.hardwoodinfo.com. You'll find a gallery of creative wood designs, too.



REMEMBER

After installation, telling hardwood flooring from engineered wood is difficult. The only thing you notice is the characteristic warmth of a wood floor.

Both hardwood and engineered hardwood come in either planks or parquet:



WARNING

- » **Planks** come in narrow to wide widths, varying lengths, and varying types of edges, either straight or beveled, and with or without real or faux pegs.

Beveled edges create a rich-looking, recessed groove that can be dirt catchers and slow down a vacuuming job.
- » **Parquet**, available in a wide range of woods, uses small strips of wood to create patterns. You can choose chevrons, simple trellis patterns, and historic styles based on those from famous chateaux and mansions. Elaborate parquets are at home in a grand room. Simple parquet fits in well with rustic, farmhouse, and cottage settings.



TIP

You can dress up plank floors with elaborate borders and decorative medallions. Thanks to computer-driven laser-cutting technology, these intricate designs are more affordable than ever. Ask your dealer about these exciting options or search online for styles.



TIP

Wood reflects sound. Lower the boom in high-traffic areas with padded carpeting on staircases and walkways.

Casting a stone floor

Stone brings to mind images of palaces and castles. But you don't need a mansion to incorporate stone in your home. Many different kinds of natural stones are available. All must be properly sealed and maintained. Get specific information about the stone that interests you from your dealer. Go to the National Stone Institute (www.naturalstoneinstitute.org/consumers) for information.

Here are some of the more popular stone varieties:

- » **Granite:** Granite is durable and the hardest of the natural stones. It varies in price depending on quality. In 2022, cost estimates ranged from as low as \$6 per square foot to about \$20 per square foot or more. Granite comes in fascinating colors and patterns, from casual earthy looks to fine and formal colors, and in textures from polished to *honed* (rough). Because of its hardness, granite is not a do-it-yourself material to work with (unless you have lots of skill and the right equipment).
- » **Limestone:** Limestone, commonly used to build monuments and museums (such as the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, the Empire State Building, and the Biltmore Estate) is available for inside use. For use in interiors (where it's popular as entryway flooring), the porous stone needs proper sealing. It doesn't react well to acids, though, so don't use it in your kitchen. As of 2022, limestone costs about \$3 to \$10 per square foot, and professional installation may increase total costs to \$6 to \$17 per square foot. You can install it yourself, but you'll need a wet saw to cut the tiles. Because limestone is porous, it needs to be sealed upon installation and resealed every 18 months.
- » **Marble:** Available in a variety of colors, marble is usually highly polished, fine, and formal. You can create elaborate patterns in contrasting colors of marble for Traditional interiors or in pale, sophisticated colors in Contemporary interiors. *Tumbled* varieties (where the finish is more casual) are at home in Old World-style kitchens. Marble is relatively soft, scratches easily, and isn't good for heavily used areas. You can purchase marble in about the same price range as granite, with average costs about \$10 to \$20 per square foot

professionally installed, as of 2022. Because of the level of skill involved, installing marble is considered a challenging do-it-yourself project.

- » **Slate:** Sometimes called *flagstone*, slate was once reserved for hallways and garden rooms. Now it's finding its way to other parts of the home, including kitchens. It comes in several natural colors, including dark gray, red, green, and variegated purple. Usually cut in large rectangles, grout lines add pattern to this surface. Slate is handsome in Traditional, Country, and Contemporary rooms. It costs less than marble or granite, averaging about \$4 per square foot as of 2022; high-end slate can cost \$25 to \$28 per square foot.
- » **Soapstone:** This stone is well named, because it feels soapy to the touch. Soapstone is a favorite surface in science laboratories because it's heat-, acid-, and water-resistant. In Scandinavia, they make stoves out of it. You can find soapstone in Country-style sinks, too. It's reasonably priced compared to other stone. Great for wet spaces because it doesn't absorb water or get slippery, soapstone also is excellent for radiant floors thanks to its ability to retain heat. Soapstone comes in prefabricated pieces and slabs and, as of 2022, ranges in price from \$45 to \$85 per square foot.

Hard-surface alternatives to stone include the following:

- » **Brick:** Brick is a handsome material that looks great in Traditional and Contemporary settings. Like many natural stones and some Mexican tiles, brick is porous and must be sealed against stains to make cleaning easier. More popular places for using it are ground-level kitchen floors, mudrooms, and back entry halls. As of 2022, on average, brick costs about \$10 per square foot plus installation, but brick is also a good candidate for do-it-yourself projects.
- » **Ceramic tile:** Available in an endless number of colors and in patterns that mimic other materials such as natural stone, ceramic tile is a great option. It comes in a wide range of tile sizes and shapes, and different-colored grouts are available, making ceramic tile one of the most versatile decorating tools. Keep in mind that heavily glazed surfaces will wear away over time. In 2022, the estimated cost for do-it-yourself installation is about \$2 to \$4 per square foot for the tile, plus the cost of the grout and other materials.
- » **Concrete:** Once the stuff of subfloors and basements, concrete is now trendy in homes, thanks to new colors, textures, and finishes. Color can be added to ready-mix concrete, applied to the top of a still-moist concrete slab, or acid-stained by professionals. Concrete can be stamped with brick, slate, and other patterns. It must be sealed to protect the color and finish. Less costly than natural stones, concrete is also easier to maintain.

- » **Glass tile:** Made of glass, this tile refracts light, creating a compelling sense of movement. Glass tile is surprisingly practical. Unlike porous ceramic tile, which must be glazed, and natural stone, which must be sealed, glass is vitreous so it doesn't absorb moisture or stain. It needs no sealer. Thanks to new technology, glass flooring is available for indoor and outdoor use. Glass tile is available at most home improvement and tile stores.
- » **Mosaic:** Made of tiny pieces of cut tile (and sometimes stone), mosaics can be pricey (compared to plain tile). Every piece is hand-cut and applied to a backer. Some mosaics are applied to a cement backer board that's good for use in damp areas, such as the shower and kitchen backsplash. Mosaic is also pre-grouted, so you can easily and quickly install it without losing any of the tiny pieces. Mosaic can be used as a border, wall mural, or floor medallion. Thanks to efficiencies in production techniques, mosaics can be worked into your design plan at affordable prices. Mosaic floors, tile inserts, and medallions can vary in price widely depending on materials, site conditions, and installation costs. Major home retailers carry mosaics suitable for do-it-yourselfers, and prices are more affordable than high-end types.
- » **Porcelain tile:** Stronger than ceramic, porcelain (a type of ceramic) has color throughout, so the color isn't lost if the tile is chipped or worn. Porcelain tile is particularly great for kitchens because it doesn't stain. But porcelain tiles do cost a bit more than glazed ceramic tiles. Porcelain tile can mimic stone and it doesn't have to be sealed. Average cost of installed porcelain is \$9 to \$40 per square foot. Do-it-yourselfers can pay \$4 to \$15 per square foot for tile and installation.
- » **Terrazzo:** A poured concrete with inset marble chips, terrazzo — popular years ago, especially in Florida and other warm-weather climates — has been rediscovered. Originally an inexpensive flooring alternative, today it's not all that cheap. Terrazzo is a distinctive material with great appeal, and it lasts forever. It works with Traditional and Contemporary interiors. Prices range from \$15 to \$80 per square foot.



Get the right tile for the right surface. Tile is classified according to specific use for walls, floors, and countertops. Make sure your tile dealer knows what surface you're buying tile for and follow the dealer's advice for installing tile.

Sizing up synthetics

Synthetic flooring is made from materials. It comes in two varieties — *resilient* and *laminate* — and both are good options.

Resilient flooring

Resilient flooring has bounce (hence, the name!). That resilience falls somewhere between the softness of carpeting and the hardness of tile or a hardwood. Resilient flooring materials include rubber, linoleum, cork, and vinyl.

Resilient flooring consists of an underlayment of felt, which is covered by a fused printed layer and then a wear layer. A highly engineered combination of polymer materials gives the resilient flooring strength and durability. It wears well — just don't wear stiletto heels on this impressionable surface. Cushioning makes resilient flooring easy on feet and legs, so it's a favorite material for kitchens and baths. It's also easily cleaned.

Resilient flooring comes in a continuous length ranging in widths from 6 feet to 16 feet. In small areas, this means a seamless installation. Resilient flooring doesn't require a level surface, and it doesn't have to be glued down. High-end resilient flooring offers a wide range of design and color choices. Here's the good news: A lot of stigma surrounding vinyl/resilient flooring seems to have vanished with the advent of better technology and style.

Easier on the feet than wood, stone, and tile, resilient vinyl flooring is resistant to water, mildew, and stains and is easy to clean. It demands a level surface and must be glued down. Design and color choices in resilient vinyl may be more limited than in resilient flooring.

Laminate flooring

Plastic laminate flooring has come a long way since it was introduced years ago. Made by layering printed paper and coatings and then fusing them under high heat and pressure, it comes in strips, planks, and squares that look like wood (and sometimes like stone).

New technology makes this material suitable for use in wet areas such as kitchens and baths. In order to be waterproof, installation instructions must be followed. Water-resistant floors must be wiped up within 30 minutes.

Do-it-yourselfers find that the basic click-and-lock system makes installation easy. Laminate flooring can also be installed directly over most existing floors, another do-it-yourself plus.

Laminate can be installed as a *floating floor* (not attached to the wall, but where the edges are covered by baseboard trim) over most existing floorings.



WARNING

Not all laminate flooring can stand up to underfloor heating. Read the product specifications and instructions for installations to see if it's right for you.

Stepping on Soft Surfaces



TIP

Although hard surfaces last longer, you may prefer softness underfoot. You can have it in the form of flooring (wall-to-wall carpeting) or floor covering (a rug that covers most of the floor).

Choosing carpeting

Wall-to-wall carpeting fills the floor area with pattern, color, and texture. When properly padded, it's extremely comfortable and among the least expensive floor coverings. As if that weren't enough, carpeting muffles noise, doubling as a sound controller. Go to the website of the Carpet and Rug Institute at <https://carpet-rug.org> for information.

Most carpeting is constructed by *tufting*, meaning the yarn is embedded in the backing. Give a second thought to buying continuous-loop carpeting. With this type of construction, when a loop starts to unravel it has no natural stopping point.



WARNING

Pet owners, beware! Our puppy started pulling on a loose thread in a living room carpet. Before anyone noticed, a large part of the rug had become one long and very loose thread. It lay in a heap at his paws while he tugged away at the connected end, delighting in his new game!

Other construction techniques include woven and needle-punch.



TIP

Carpeting can assume either a very laid-back or a very in-your-face role. If you pick a show-off pattern, it's safe to keep the upholstery and window treatments in a solid or all-over pattern, or a texture that doesn't compete with the carpeting.

Commercial-grade carpeting, in handsome stripes and geometrics, not only looks good but also works hard in heavy wear-and-tear areas like family rooms. If you haven't considered commercial-grade carpeting before, be sure to check it out. Note that tightly woven, no-pile commercial carpets often feature novelty weave patterns.

Ask your carpet dealer whether the pattern can be installed so seams don't show. An all-over printed pattern hides seams, as does low- and high-pile surfaces. (*Pile* refers to the height of the carpet's fibers.)



REMEMBER

Commercial-grade carpeting is slightly more expensive than residential-grade carpeting, but well worth the price if you intend to use it for a long time.

Don't use ordinary carpeting in baths and kitchens. Look for bathroom carpeting (which can be laundered) and kitchen carpeting (which doesn't allow water to pass through to the floor beneath).



WARNING

Carpeted kitchens and baths are a turn-off to potential buyers. Consider installing kitchen carpeting in the eating area and a scrubbable hard surface (ceramic tile or resilient flooring) near the sink and stove.

Be sure to use the correct padding with the carpeting you choose. Ask the salesperson for guidance in choosing the right one. And, to protect your investment, ask your carpet dealer about a stain-resistant protective coating to prolong your carpeting's life.

Resting on your rugs

Rugs come in many different sizes. But generally, a *rug* covers most of the floor, while an *area rug* defines a small area. Put padding under your area rug to keep it from slipping.



TIP

You can use area rugs just about anywhere in a house — in the entry hall, kitchen, den, and bedrooms to help define a space visually or add color and comfort (see Figure 13-1).



TIP

The larger the room, the larger your area rug can be. For example, we placed a 10-x-12-foot rug on a diagonal angle in the middle of a long, rectangular, combination living and dining room. A sofa, coffee table, and two easy chairs sit on top of the rug. As a result, the rug defines a conversational area and orients the seating toward a TV and window with an ocean view. Although seating faces more toward one end of the long room, the angled rug directs the eye to both ends of the room so no area seems neglected.

Rugs are manufactured in several different ways: machine-made, handmade, and homemade. Machine-made rugs are the most plentiful and least expensive. Handmade rugs are costly but may increase in value over time. Homemade rugs have tremendous charm — perfect for Country and Cottage interiors.

FIGURE 13-1:
Area rugs on
wooden flooring
create a look of
comfort in a
bedroom.



Photograph courtesy of Mark Candelario, AIA (www.candelariadesign.com); photograph by Dino Tonn

Machine-made rugs

Many more people can own handsome rugs now than in the past because of machines. Machines produce rugs quickly, eliminating the high cost of labor. Traditional weaves include the following:

- » **Axminster:** Rugs that look hand-tufted and have unlimited pattern complexity and color selection
- » **Velvet:** Cut-pile rugs that look like (but are less resilient than) Wilton rugs; usually woven in solid colors
- » **Wilton:** Woven on a *jacquard* (a patterned weaving technique) tapestry-like loom that permits as many as eight colors; considered the best of the machine-made rugs

Handmade rugs

Historic Western handmade rugs include

- » **Aubusson:** Similar to a heavy tapestry, Aubusson rugs have distinctive floral patterns.



THE SKINNY ON ORIENTAL RUGS

The term *oriental rugs* is used mainly for convenience to refer to rugs originating from different cultures, countries, groups, and religious faiths. Oriental rugs that come from the Islamic world may also be referred to as “Islamic carpets”; those coming from Iran may be referred to as “Persian carpets.”

Oriental rugs come from the Near East and Far East. The six most recognized types are Caucasian, Chinese, Indian, Persian, Turkish, and Turkoman. Each has distinctive traditional colors and patterns and comes in a variety of sizes. Knowledgeable salespeople are usually eager to point out the merits of a rug. But remember that, in general, better rugs have more knots, are heavier, have a more distinct pattern, and have finer (more distinct) lines than their lower-priced counterparts.

Oriental rugs are a decorator’s delight. Almost any color you could want is available, even though you may have to search a while. Patterns and colors range from formal to casual. Although oriental rugs go with any style, not every oriental rug goes with every style. Select your oriental rug carefully. Like a beautiful jewel, it deserves the right setting. Ask whether you can try out your rug at home and, if it doesn’t look just right, return it for another.

» **Savonnerie:** Made in France, Savonnerie rugs are constructed similarly to oriental rugs (see the nearby sidebar), but with French patterns.

Homemade rugs

Rugs are either made at home (as they were years ago) or are commercially made with a homemade look. These affordable rugs — made in both wool and cotton — are highly decorative and make great floor and wall accessories. Homemade rugs include the following:

- » **Chain-stitch rugs:** Made in India, these rugs attach a chain-stitch pattern onto a backing.
- » **Dhurries:** These flat-weave rugs, usually with floral designs, are made in India of wool or cotton — originally for use on summerhouse floors.
- » **Hooked rugs:** These rugs are made by pulling and knotting yarns through a coarse canvas burlap backing.
- » **Kilims:** These flat-weave rugs, made in the Near East, come in geometric designs and strong colors.

- » **Navajo rugs:** These flat-weave rugs also come in geometric patterns but are woven by Navajo Indians in the American Southwest.
- » **Needlepoint rugs:** These rugs are made in large quantities in such places as Portuguese convents.

Solving Problems with Flooring



TIP

If you're faced with an awkwardly shaped room, you can use floorings to reshape it (see Figure 13-2). Consider the following list of trouble areas and the way to incorporate all types of flooring materials, including carpeting, laminate, ceramic tile, stone, or wood. Draw on these suggestions when you're ready to redecorate — and reshape — rooms in your house:

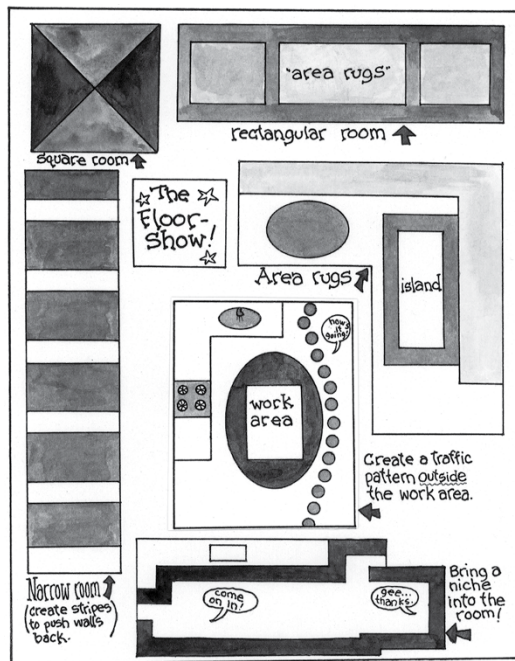


FIGURE 13-2:
To reshape awkward spaces, use flooring materials to create designs.

Illustration by Elizabeth Kurtzman

- » **Give a green light to traffic.** Give busy rooms with confusing traffic patterns a pathway with inserts in a distinct shape (circles, triangles, or rectangles) and look (color, texture, or pattern). Make sure inserts are the same depth as the regular flooring. Use this trick in tile or carpeting to steer foot traffic toward a destination.

- » **Include niches.** Carry the same decorative border into the niche area to maintain a feeling of continuity. Niches can often be offset with other design features, too.
- » **Liven up an L-shaped kitchen.** Add a sense of organization. Surround an island with a contrasting decorative border. Create a medallion in the middle of a work area when there's no island. Add a perimeter border that coordinates with the island border and/or medallion.
- » **Widen narrow rooms.** Visually stretch the room's width with a series of broad stripes on the floor. The longer the room, the broader the stripes can be, and the more (and more dramatic) colors you can introduce. For shorter rooms, keep stripes narrow and limit the palette to two light colors. Rough out your stripe design on graph paper and show it to the floor-covering dealer before you order material.
- » **Add interest to rectangular rooms.** Use floor-covering inserts to create the look of *area rugs* surrounded by deep borders. Large rooms can handle multiple areas. A large center rug surrounded by two smaller rugs is one idea. Work out your design on graph paper until you get just the right area-rug size(s).
- » **Color-block square rooms.** Make a stodgy square room appear dynamic with color blocking. Divide the room into four triangles (visually draw an X from corner to corner on your floor plan). Four different color blocks can be used. Two colors can also be alternated.

Color choice conveys a mood. Use vivid colors in a playroom, child's room, or garden room. Use sophisticated shades for Contemporary rooms. Add extra dynamism by offsetting the blocks a bit.

FLOORING HACKS FOR RENTERS

Even if you don't own your home, you still want to make the place *feel* like home. Do the math before shelling out for upgrades — you may not want to be giving your landlord a free upgrade to their property. But if you're going to be in your rented home for a good amount of time (like two years) and hate that floor, do something about it.

If you want to go for something more permanent, you'll need your landlord's approval first. See if you can work with them to share the costs; maybe they'll cover the materials if you install the flooring yourself. Or maybe they'll upgrade the flooring before you move in or renew your lease.

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Get an on-trend look all by yourself. Consider easy options that you can remove when your lease is up:

- **Carpeting:** Even inexpensive wall-to-wall carpeting adds a bit of luxe (taped, not tacked down). Plus, you can take it with you to your next destination.
- **Area rugs:** Portable, cleanable, and affordable, area rugs can add style and comfort. If the room is small, a room-size rug may fit wall-to-wall! Inexpensive straw rugs can also add a homey look.
- **Peel-and-stick tiles:** Got boring flooring? Love the look of patterns? Homes and apartments can get an instant makeover in very little time. It's a perfect do-it-yourself project. These temporary solutions can also cover ugly grout. Try samples first before you commit.
- **Removable sheet flooring:** Sheet-size resilient flooring comes in a wide range of looks and doesn't need to be glued down — tape should do the trick. Peel-and-stick tiles (carpet, synthetic) may be a good solution and a great look.

- » Accounting for form, function, and fashion
- » Customizing your ceiling with special effects
- » Perfecting your ceiling style throughout your house

Chapter 14

Styling Ceilings

Ceilings are an important part of any decorating plan. All are creative decorating opportunities. Yet, in both older and newer homes, the ceiling is often a wasteland. In newer open-floorplan homes, large ceiling areas may be a vast disappointing void. They, like small ceilings in both newer and older houses, are often just painted white — an old decorating idea that shouldn't become an automatic default choice. In addition to these minor challenges, some ceilings present problems.

This chapter helps you recognize and deal decoratively with ceilings. We offer solutions for some common problems and show you ways to improve your ceiling's style. In this chapter, we give you reason to stare at the ceiling!

Considering Form and Function

Ceilings in traditional construction hide heating and air-conditioning ducts. They also hide items such as light fixtures, smoke alarms, and sound equipment. Ceilings (and the insulation above them) affect a room's temperature and noise level.

There's no avoiding paying attention to light fixtures and other practicalities. But integrating your ceiling design into your overall room scheme can give your room the look of a decorator showcase or movie star's home.

Peel-and-stick mirrors are on trend, and why not use them on your ceiling? A mirrored ceiling, associated with Hollywood bedrooms, may appeal. But beware — be sure the mirror is securely attached!

It's safe to base your ceiling treatment on the architectural style clues in your house. Do you see any Old World, Victorian, or Country elements? Or is your house strictly Contemporary? Most houses (and apartments) aren't one distinct (or pure) style or period. More eclectic, they mix two or more interpretations of architectural styles. (For more information on styles, see Chapters 8 and 9.)



TIP

To make decorating easier, if you're building or remodeling, ask the builder to hold off on the popcorn (a rough textured spray-on). Ask for a plain, smooth ceiling surface. Smooth ceilings not only appear higher than their popcorn counterparts, but are also easier to paint or embellish. If you have a popcorn ceiling, ask your local paint dealer for the best way to remove it.

Painting Your Ceiling

Painting a ceiling a beautiful color is an easy way to change any room's appearance. Whether you want to create just a little interest or a work of art, this section gives you all the answers — and ideas — you need.

Getting it white



TIP

White ceilings used to be standard fare, but they went out of a style for a while. Now they're back in fashion for a good reason: A white ceiling reflects more light than any other color. If you're looking for a sure bet, white may be for you. Figure 14-1 offers a great example of a perfect white ceiling.

Here are some tips for playing up a white ceiling.

- » **Pick a perfect white.** You can use ceiling white or you can add interest to a white ceiling by choosing the *right* white. A white with a smidgen of color can add style (a far cry from the old stark white ceiling color) and won't visually lower a ceiling because there is less contrast to the wall.
- » **Call out a chandelier or nice light fixture.** Create a focal point of the same hue on the ceiling. Place a vibrant spot of color — in the form of an oval or circle painted on the ceiling — over a point of interest, such as a dining area, a conversation area, or a room's center.

- » **Accent a recessed area.** Got an *architectural recess* (a central area that holds a chandelier or special lighting fixture)? Paint the recess an accent color to add pizzazz.



FIGURE 14-1:
A white ceiling
echoes the white
wainscot and
contrasts gray
walls.

Photograph courtesy of Sherwin-Williams

Using color for unity

You can unify the ceiling and walls in either of these one-hue schemes:

- » **Monochromatic schemes (one color):** Paint the walls and ceiling in the same color. It takes less work to use the same paint for all these surfaces. This works well for lighter colors, particularly neutrals.

This technique also works effectively for creating intimate rooms using deep or rich colors such as *eggplant* (a deep grayed purple), navy blue, or even black. Trying dark colors in a small room may make it seem more like a closet than a room, so use your best judgment.

- » **Monotone schemes (variations of one color):** You can play with the level of intensity. Paint the ceiling a tint (lighter) or tone (darker) of the wall color. A tint makes a low ceiling seem to float away. A tone, also called a *shade*, visually lowers the ceiling, which makes a large room seem more intimate. Varying color intensity provides both unity and variety!

Using color for contrast

Create drama by painting the walls and ceiling contrasting colors. This technique works wonders in large rooms with high ceilings. Here are some ideas for dealing with ceilings:

- » In a small- or medium-size room, paint the ceiling a contrast color lighter than the walls to help open up the room. An atmospheric pale gray-blue ceiling in an apricot room is a good example.
- » In a room with an awkwardly high ceiling, you can lower the ceiling visually by painting it a dark color.
- » A blacked-out ceiling, for example, can hide imperfections and make the ceiling disappear.
- » To make ceilings seem higher, keep the molding the same color as the walls.
- » To make the ceilings seem lower, paint the molding the same color as the ceiling.
- » On a high ceiling, if you're using the same or similar dark color as the walls you can add drama by painting ceiling molding a contrasting color.

Designing your own pattern



TIP

Create your own modern art graphic design and paint away! If wallpaper covers the walls, use colors from the pattern for your ceiling design. This technique is inexpensive and adds a sense of fun and play. Graphics are especially cheerful in a child's room, bathroom, playroom, or laundry.

Painting a sky

Painting clouds on a ceiling is a popular technique for adding instant atmosphere. You don't need to be an artist to duplicate the effect of soft wisps of clouds. Plenty of faux painting books give step-by-step instructions and list all the materials and best colors. But if you're no Monet, consider hiring an artist, perhaps from a local art school. (Be sure to see samples of the student's work first.)

Gold stars and a moon on a midnight-blue sky may be just the cure for insomnia. A friend, who isn't an artist, painted a starry night scene on the ceiling of her young daughter's bedroom. Her daughter now counts stars, not sheep.

Stenciling



TIP

Stenciling is easy, even for an amateur. For inspiration, look at decorating magazines and art history books. They show designs as simple as trailing ivy borders that spill over onto the ceiling. Stencil a trellis pattern to raise a too-low ceiling. Stencil large flowers — cabbage roses or sunflowers — to lower a too-high ceiling.

Stencil patterns, paints, and idea books are available in craft shops.

Creating a mural



TIP

Take a tip from Michelangelo — turn your ceiling into a giant mural). If you're a rolling stone, make sure the mural is painted on a canvas and attached in such a way that it can be removed and carted off to your next home.

To make painting easier, use a projector to cast an enlarged image on the painting surface. You can use a slide projector or even your computer and an LCD projector. You can easily trace the image's major outlines on your canvas in pencil, and you may even use a paint-by-numbers approach to mark which colors go in which sections.

Making the Most of Your Ceiling

Painting isn't your only option. As this section explains, the sky's the limit when making your ceiling seem to come alive. Here are some ideas for using different materials — everything from fabric to straw matting — to cover your ceilings in an innovative, statement-making way.

Letting lattice work its charms

You can buy lattice at garden shops or home improvement stores. (Lattice may come in various sizes, but the most common is 4 x 8 feet. You can typically choose between wood and plastic.) Painted white and attached to a dark green or bright blue ceiling (and even to the walls), latticework creates a great garden room mood. If you know basic carpentry, you're on your way. If you're all thumbs with a hammer and nails, call a carpenter.

Revamping with wall coverings

Wall covering adds a finishing touch to a ceiling. You can decorate a small bathroom by covering the walls and ceiling in the same small, *nondirectional* (no up or down) print.

Don't hesitate to cover a small room's ceiling (and walls) in a wallpaper with a dark (maybe even black) background. The dark background makes walls and ceiling fade away, and the pattern stands out. Wallpapering a room's ceiling in a lattice or trellis pattern makes the space seem more spacious.

In a larger room, use a small print for the ceiling that coordinates with a larger pattern for the walls. If you're using a large-scale floral pattern on walls in a not-so-big room, and the pattern is too big for the ceiling and there's no coordinating small pattern, cut out some of the flowers and glue them on the ceiling in a pattern that looks good to your critical eye.

Want to know more about wall coverings? Turn to Chapter 12.

Tenting with fabric

Tenting calls for yards and yards of fabric, but it creates a great sense of fun and fantasy. For the best method, yardage, and other vital information, check with your local upholsterer. In addition to looking wonderful, tenting absorbs sound, quieting a dining room, bedroom, bathroom, or garden room.



TIP

Tenting isn't necessarily a do-it-yourself project, unless you're very handy with fabric and you have assistance putting up the material. (Some how-to decorating books give instructions.) Use a fabric with an all-over, nondirectional pattern (no flowers with stems, book jackets with lettering, and so on), so you don't have a problem in matching the pattern. Only the pros work with stripes! Tenting is best installed by professionals.

Creating a ribbon trellis

Grosgrain ribbon (characterized by its large grain and thick fabric) glued on the ceiling in a trellis pattern creates a feeling similar to a wooden lattice. This technique is slightly less dimensional, but it's quick, easy, and inexpensive.

We created a textured grosgrain ribbon trellis in the tiny New York City kitchen of a celebrity client, matching the ribbon color to the wall paint color. He loved it! We used a 1-inch-wide ribbon, but you can use any width you want.



TIP

Be sure to use grosgrain ribbon (glue seeps through satin ribbon, marring it) which is easy to work with. Design, measure, and lightly mark where the ribbon goes before you start gluing. Elmer's glue worked well for us.

Applying straw matting

Straw matting adds an exotic touch to a garden room's ceiling and to an Africa-inspired decorating scheme. Mats come in a variety of sizes and shapes. Attach the matting with glue so it doesn't sag. And don't use straw matting in a high-moisture area. If you like the idea but prefer to use matchstick blinds, they work, too — especially if you don't have to cut them to fit between beams.

Installing ceramic tiles

Designers frequently use ceramic tile to cover bathrooms, garden rooms, decorative niches, and alcoves in kitchens and other rooms. Tile stores carry huge selections of distinctive tiles. Ask which ones are better suited for ceilings (some are thinner and work better than others). Also ask about techniques for securing tiles while the adhesive is drying.



WARNING

If you have any doubts about doing it yourself, don't hesitate to have a professional install them for the best results.

Reducing noise with acoustic tiles

Acoustic tile has its place — and that's wherever noise is a problem. A basement practice room for your rock-'n'-roll teenager's band may be one such place. More interesting designs and patterns are available every year, including painted-plank looks. If you already have acoustic tiles and want to spruce them up, consider a specialty coating designed for acoustic tile ceilings that's applied by a contractor.



TIP

Recently, a client asked us to beautify a room with a two-level ceiling. The dreaded popcorn covered the room's higher center, and the perimeter had a drop ceiling of acoustic tile. To make the too-low and really ugly acoustic tile disappear, we painted it the same garden green as the wall. We left the popcorn ceiling crisp Country white for strongest contrast, and it worked. Now, it's nearly impossible to see the dark green ceiling because the eye speeds to the higher, bright white one.

Decouping your ceiling

You can apply favorite motifs on your ceiling using a technique called *decoupage*, which involves covering paper cutouts with several layers of lacquer or varnish.

Try angels in your little cherub's bedroom, big cabbage roses above your bathtub, veggies in the kitchen, and so on. Look for a decoupage kit at your local craft shop — they come with easy-to-follow directions.

Before you decoupage, give the ceiling a fresh coat of paint (you won't be painting it after decoupage). Base your new ceiling paint color on two considerations: your wall color and the dominant color of the motifs you're adding to the ceiling.

You want your decoupage motifs to stand out. Contrast is good — for dark prints, use a light background and for light prints, use a dark one. You may want to paint your ceiling a light tint of your wall color for greater unity and less chance of making a color mistake.

Mirroring for glamour

A light- and image-reflecting mirror adds tremendous glamour to any surface. It should be installed by a professional, though. Use it wherever the mirror will reflect what you want it to reflect.

Glass mirror is not the only light-reflecting and mirror-imaging material at your beck and call. Metal panels cover our long, narrow kitchen ceiling — reflecting light, providing an easy-to-clean surface, and covering an ancient ceiling in this contemporary style space.

Building the Ceiling You'll Want to Decorate

If you're thinking that big decorative changes are in order, these remodeling ideas may be for you. Read on to find more information on everything from raising your ceiling (or lowering it) to other techniques, including adding beams or creating *coffers* (recessed areas defined by crossed beamlike architectural elements). After you've created your new ceiling, check out the ideas we offer for decorating it.

Constructing a false ceiling

Take the idea of a dropped or lowered ceiling to new heights by asking a carpenter to drop (lower) only the outside perimeter of a too-high ceiling. Then have the carpenter install a light in the center area and cover it with a stained glass (real or faux) or other translucent cover. (An alternative may be to install a prefabricated plastic dome that looks like stained glass. Ask your local lighting dealer for sources.) Refer to earlier paint ideas for these new surfaces.

Raising the ceiling

Liberate your room. Ripping out a too-low ceiling to the rafters creates a dramatic effect and expands the space. Raising a ceiling is definitely a job for professional carpenters or *highly skilled* do-it-yourselfers. The ceiling may still be low by today's standards, so follow our guidelines for painting exposed rafters and ceiling areas between to control degrees of contrast for unity and variety.

Including classical touches

Traditional interiors used fancy, carved plaster trims (called *anaglypta*, a classical Greek term for low-relief decoration) on ceilings, especially on ceiling areas above chandeliers. Many people now have a renewed interest in these ceiling-enhancing decorations. They're available in a lightweight, easy-to-install plastic that looks like the real thing. Ask to see them at your local home center or building supply store. For painted color finishes, see earlier guidelines.

Adding beams

Beams add line, direction, and pattern to ceilings. Different kinds of beams are used traditionally in various styles of architecture. Heavy natural wood rough beams in their natural colors are characteristic of rustic Colonial American and certain Old World European interiors.

Lighter, more refined box beams show up in fancier Early American homes. (For more information on styles, see Chapter 8.) In other interiors, beams are white-washed, bleached, antiqued, or stenciled.



TIP

Painting the space between beams a light color and the beam itself a darker contrasting color heightens the illusion of depth. This trick is a neat space expander in a small- or medium-size room.

Another decorating trick is to paint a low ceiling and beams in the same pale color. This trick tends to raise them both, making the ceiling seem higher. We chose a cool mushroom color for the too-low ceiling of a New Hampshire cottage with knotty pine plank walls.

Creating coffers

A *coffer* is a variation on a beamed ceiling (see Figure 14-2). One difference is that, in beamed ceilings, beams run in one direction, creating repeating lines. When using coffers, you use fewer beams or beamlike architectural elements that cross at right angles, creating squares of empty space.



FIGURE 14-2:
Coffers divide the
ceiling area,
creating a restful
pattern.

Photograph courtesy of Mark Candelaria, AIA (www.candelaria-design.com); photograph by Dino Tonn

Looking up at a coffered ceiling is like looking into the insides of many boxes. Take coffering one step further by decoratively painting or stenciling the *wells* (the areas inside the coffers).

Using planks

Real wood planks — especially redwood and teak — add texture, rich color, and line to ceilings. Prefinished planks need no further decorative touch. Follow paint and color guidelines for raw-wood planks.



TIP

If you use real-wood planks in a bathroom, make sure the room is well ventilated and ask your paint dealer about the best coating to protect the wood from moisture.

Because planks create lines, make sure they run in the direction you want the eye to travel. In a rectangular room, apply planks crosswise on the ceiling to make the room appear shorter and wider. Applying planks lengthwise to the ceiling in a short room will make it seem less short. If you're handy, you may want to install planks yourself. If not, hire a carpenter.

Adding carved ceilings

Adding a carved look to your ceiling may seem impossible, but a variety of materials makes it as easy as falling off a log. Home improvement centers and sites carry a wide variety of looks, every one of them beautiful and designed to be installed by do-it-yourselfers.

Glue-up PVC ceiling tiles (as large as 2 x 2 feet) come in many styles and colors. Finishes range from metallic to plaster looks. Carved-wood panels may be applied to ceiling or wall. Prices for these materials range widely. They can transform a ceiling from plain to amazingly beautiful in a matter of hours (see Figure 14-3).



FIGURE 14-3: Ceilings in a large room benefit from strapwork designs that lend a carved effect.

Photograph courtesy of Mark Candelaria, AIA (www.candelariadesign.com); photograph by Dino Tonn

Warming up with wood accents

A little wood can warm up the ceiling. Here are a few design ideas for starters:

- » **Add wood planks to the ceiling inside a recessed area intended for a snazzy light fixture.** They're available at home improvement sites in different styles suitable for accenting tray, coffered, cove, dropped, and cathedral ceilings.

- » **For the chandelier (modern or traditional) without a recessed area, create a wood surround that could look like an intricate plank configuration or a carved or plain wood-veneer panel.** Ceiling medallions, also called centers, hide gaps while adding pizzazz. Check out home improvement sites for all kinds of do-it-yourself design ideas.
- » **Use wood trim (like Traditional-style walls panels) to create a ceiling effect.** Peel-and-stick wood trim can be found at any home improvement site. For the really rustic room, use narrow dried tree branches as seen in ceilings of ancient adobe homes.

Livening up with laminate

Do-it-yourself wood-look laminate ceiling planks are readily available from a number of sources. Armstrong Ceilings offers a variety of materials. Use these as a good-looking, budget-saving way to cover an ugly ruined ceiling.

Going nostalgic with stamped ceilings

Stamped tin ceilings are not a thing of the distant past. Their intricate fascinating designs are available in an infinite number of designs and color finishes — gold-washed white tin, unfinished tin, copper, bronze, antique taupe, aged turquoise, aged brass, anodized titanium, ancient gold, graphite gold, and a host of others — all sure to make any decorator drool!

Start your search at online for decorative ceiling tiles and stamped tin ceilings — and plan to spend some time looking at all the choices.

- » Eying the numerous roles of windows
- » Dressing windows for beauty and function
- » Making special coverups

Chapter **15**

Dressing Windows

No sooner had windows been invented than some late sleeper discovered a need for simple shades and blinds. The first room-darkening shade was probably a boulder rolled across the cave door, but window treatments have come a long way since then.

In this chapter, you'll find out about different window styles, various kinds of window coverings, and new concepts in shades and blinds. You'll discover conventional and unconventional window treatments to make all your windows wonderful.

Exposing Windows

With or without fancy treatments, windows provide a focal point (see Chapter 4) and a spot where everyone wants to sit — they're second only to a fireplace in winter. They open a room's interior to the views outside and flood it with natural sunlight. Practically speaking, windows provide views, ventilation, and security (especially if they're impact-resistant).

Architecturally interesting windows — large or small — are things of beauty best appreciated when left without any sort of coverup. If such practical matters as light control and privacy aren't an issue, leave your windows bare or almost bare.

For example, a client's remodeled home had more than 100 windows. Covering them, even simply, was a major budget drain. For bare windows to be beautiful, they need beautifully designed trims. If your window is basically nice but just needs trim, add it. Note that windows in the same room have to be trimmed complementarily, but not necessarily identically.



TECHNICAL
STUFF

If you decide to leave your window bare, consider using a window film that blocks harmful ultraviolet light, reduces interior heat, lowers utility costs, reduces glare, increases privacy, and adds some protection from storms (even hurricanes). Several companies make this film.

Consider adding exterior awnings to your bare windows to shield your interior from direct sunrays. Exterior awnings are visible from inside your room, so consider them an extension of your interior design.

NAMING YOUR WINDOW

Knowing what type of windows you have allows you to discuss them with drapery makers, blind installers, and designers. The rundown includes

- **Awning:** Awning windows sash-crank open from the bottom outward (like a patio awning). Awning-type windows called *hoppers* do just the reverse; they open from the top outward and are often used in basements. They're also used below fixed-pane picture windows in Contemporary rooms.
- **Bay:** A bay window extends floor to ceiling and projects beyond the plane of the wall.
- **Bow:** A bow window is curved similar to a bay window in that it projects out from the facade, but it has more sashes and less angularity than the bay. It's also known as a *compass* or *radial bay* window.
- **Casement:** This window has sashes that crank open from the sides or outward from the center.
- **Double-hung:** Stacked windows open by sliding up or down past each other.
- **Fixed-pane or fixed-frame:** This window is immovable.
- **Garden:** A garden window is a small, high oriel window often installed at countertop height behind a kitchen sink.
- **Oriel:** An oriel window projects from the wall, but unlike a bay, the oriel doesn't go all the way to the ground. Instead, brackets, corbels, or a cantilever support it.

- **Palladian:** A particular configuration of two double-hung windows, a Palladian flanks a central same-height, double-hung window, topped with a semicircular fixed window.
- **Window walls or windowscapes:** These include collections of various windows and doors that make up a whole wall of glass.



Photograph courtesy of Patricia Hart McMillan; photograph by Natalia Sun

Choosing Shades, Blinds, and Shutters

Shades, blinds, and shutters are *hard* window treatments as opposed to curtains, which are soft treatments. When used alone, they add crispness to a Contemporary room. For clarity's sake, we call the old-fashioned roller type (up and down) *shades* and the newer verticals and horizontals (once called Venetians) *blinds*.

Shades, blinds, and shutters (solid, louvered, or novelty) do a great job of blocking out light. Traditionally, they were installed next to the window and then were topped with a glass or sash curtain, a draw curtain, and finally an overdrapery

(more about curtains and draperies later in this chapter). The differences (and advantages) among shades, blinds, and shutters include the following:

- » **Shades** are generally an inexpensive (but, surprisingly, not the least expensive) way to solve light and privacy issues. They come in a wide assortment of materials, including novelty weaves and fashionable colors. They may come trimmed or decorated for custom looks. These shades can be installed to roll up from the bottom or down from the top, depending on your light control, viewing, and privacy concerns.
- » **Blinds** have come a long way since simple wooden Venetian blinds, including wide-slat and thin-slat aluminum blinds. Clothlike materials in different weights and textures introduce a new softness that's more compatible with Traditional interiors. They offer protection from UV rays that damage textiles, woods, and art objects. Blinds may be set close to the window inside deep *reveals* (protruding frames with recessed areas that allow for inside mount), or on the same plane as the wall in an outside mount. Study your situation to be sure what effect you want and what your situation allows.
- » **Shutters** come in conventional (2½-inch) width slats used in Traditional settings, as well as large-scale (4-inch or more) California or Plantation slats that are compatible with Contemporary and sophisticated Rustic interiors. Shutters add visual interest and a sense of drama to otherwise boring windows, rooms with bad views, and architecturally deficient rooms. Look for a variety of textures (plain, wood grain, and more), materials (wood and wood-look plastic), and colors (including unfinished that you can paint yourself). Whether natural wood or painted, shutters supply excellent energy efficiency.

Before you go shopping for blinds, consider the types. Many blinds manufacturers and catalogs offer several options, including decorative fabric trims and clatter controlling devices. Give the following blinds a good look (and don't get confused by their names or misnomers):

- » **Matchstick blinds** (a kind of roll-up shade originally made of split bamboo or other tropical materials) add the spirit of the tropics, energy efficiency, and some privacy to a room. But they don't totally block out the sun or create a sense of privacy unless they're backed with light-absorbing material.
- » **Venetian blinds** (usually horizontal) are made in vinyl, metal, and wood. You can control light and privacy by tilting the slats or vanes. Use them in almost any style interior from Traditional and formal to Contemporary and casual.
- » **Vertical blinds**, a must for sliding doors, come in metal, vinyl (that can look like wood), and fabric and can be coordinated with other types of shades, throughout your home, for complete harmony.

Are you more interested in decorating your windows with shades? Don't think that all shades are alike. Remember, the words *blinds* and *shades* are used in various ways. Consider these types of shades:

- » **Balloon or Austrian shades**, with extra volumes of material, are great choices for Romantic interiors. These kinds of shades are more than beautiful: They provide energy efficiency, light control, and sound absorption.
- » **Cellular fabric shades** offer energy efficiency, UV light control (some styles *totally* block out light, but others don't, so check the manufacturer's light-control grading), sound control, and a unified look (the cords and controls are hidden).
- » **Natural fiber shades** made from mesh add rusticity. Just as with matchstick blinds, back natural fiber shades if you want total privacy.
- » **Roman shades** come in various degrees of fullness from almost flat to very full and are very decorative. Light control and privacy depend on how much you let them down. Roman shades work well with a wide range of styles but are tailored and more masculine. (See Figure 15-1 for a great example of Roman shades.)



FIGURE 15-1:
Roman shades
add texture and
color contrast to
white walls.

Photograph courtesy of Dino Tonn (www.dinotonnphotography.com)



TIP

Valances cover the hardware at the shade and add a decorative touch. If you need just a touch of pattern, color, or softness, consider using only a valance.

TAKING YOUR MEASUREMENTS

Measuring windows isn't brain surgery, but correct measurements are vital when you're ordering blinds and shades, particularly with inside-mount blinds. Follow these guidelines when measuring and estimating yardage and cost.

If you're the least bit uncomfortable with your measuring prowess, check with a professional before ordering.

- Use a steel measuring tape for accuracy. Rulers are less accurate, and cloth tape measures stretch and may not give precise results.
- Take exact measurements. Round up to the nearest $\frac{1}{8}$ inch.
- Measure height and then width. Take note of which measurement is height and which is width, and measure all four sides because windows can be irregularly shaped.
- Measure every window. Just because windows appear the same to your eye doesn't mean they actually are.
- Decide whether you want mounting inside the frame or outside the frame and measure appropriately. Use inside mounting if you want a clean, Contemporary look — and determine if the frame space is deep enough to hold the hardware. Use outside mounting if the window openings are small and you want them to look larger or if the window is imperfect and you want to hide it.
- For measuring inside-mounting window treatments, make sure the opening has enough clear space for the mounting hardware. The manufacturer usually recommends a minimum depth possible for inside mounting.
- For inside-mounting treatments that are completely flush within the window opening, make sure you have the minimum depth for flush inside mounting.
- To allow for clearance of operating hardware on blinds and shades on inside mounts only, deduct the manufacturer's recommended amount for that model (commonly anywhere from $\frac{1}{8}$ to $\frac{3}{8}$ of an inch).
- To avoid the light-admitting strip beside blackout shades, measure for shades an inch or two wider than the window.

Various types of blinds and shades require unique measurements for hardware, operational equipment, or cornices. Check with your supplier for more detailed information before committing yourself.

Heeding the Curtain Call

Curtains and draperies work hard at blocking light, sound, and temperature. In addition to these functions, they're also extraordinarily decorative, adding enormous personality to a room through color, pattern, and texture.



TIP

When choosing a patterned fabric for a curtain, especially an unlined curtain, scrunch the fabric in your hand. Doing so allows you to see how the pattern will look when gathered or pleated as it hangs at your window and how it will look with light streaming behind it. Don't wait until the fabric has been made into curtains and hung in your room to be surprised!

Traditionally, windows were treated to three types of curtains:

- » A sash curtain (usually sheer, to filter light and provide some privacy)
- » A draw curtain (to block out light)
- » An overdrapery (which was purely decorative and stationary or unfunctional)



TECHNICAL
STUFF

Today, draperies usually open and close (or *draw*) and are called *draperies* (a noun) — never *drapes* (a verb).

In very formal rooms (with sufficiently high ceilings), all the layerings of window treatments were topped with a cornice or valance (to hide the hardware). This Traditional (expensive) multilayered treatment carries on today in period, very formal, or dressy rooms.

Today, we think of *curtains* as sash curtains (often unlined and in a variety of lengths and tied or held back), and *draperies* as those that draw, completely closing off the window.

Readymade

Curtains and draperies are readily available as readymades in stock or standard lengths to conform to typical window sizes and ceiling heights. Finding readymades (generally less expensive than custom curtains) that work in your decorating project is possible.

Perhaps they only need to customize with trim that's available from a drapery or fabric shop. Or, you can embellish them with appliques and ribbons with which you can embellish plain panels. Some only need to be hung — simply or creatively.

Custom-designed curtains

Custom curtains allow you to choose the exact fabric needed for your interior design. Check out curtain design books, which can help you in deciding how simple or how lavish to make your curtains. Before you begin your curtain search, know that curtain designs often are a matter of selecting a *heading* (pleats and other decorative devices for gathering fabric into the desired fullness when hung at the window). You can choose from many different headings, but these are the more familiar:

- » **Brisby pleats:** What curtain makers call the technique of pinching pleats at the top, where rings are attached.
- » **French pleats:** Narrow folds neatly stacked and attached together (usually in groups of three pulled together) — a classic solution — allowing for sewing rings on top or attaching pins for a traverse rod behind.
- » **Pencil pleats:** Narrow columns of folds that are continuous across the top of the drapery panel. These pleats must be tied or held back because they don't fold, stack, and stay in place.
- » **Smocked heading:** A *smocking tape* (a band of fabric with rows of cords that can be pulled, gathering material as the cords are pulled) creates a dressmaker's touch.

Top billing for your curtains

Curtains and draw draperies are often topped off by a separate item that essentially hides hardware but may serve additional decorative purposes:

- » **Cornice:** A cornice is an upholstered wood shape (usually architectural, but it may be entirely fanciful in design).
- » **Lambrequin:** Think of a cornice that extends to the floor, creating a shadow-box effect and adding a sense of architecture to both Traditional and Contemporary interiors. Use lambrequins over bare windows, blinds, or full curtains.
- » **Pelmet:** A pelmet is an architecturally or artfully shaped fabric stiffened with *buckram* (a stiffly starched fabric that tailors and dressmakers use).
- » **Valance:** A valance is a length of decorative drapery that may be elaborately pleated, shirred, gathered, and trimmed or simply plain. It may match your curtains in the same fabric, or it can coordinate with your curtains with pattern, color, and/or texture. You can also line your valance with a contrasting fabric for some added oomph.



TIP

A modern move is to drape fabric loosely over a decorative rod or pole or through brackets, in a nod to conventional valances and swags. Often, swags (sometimes called *scarves* because they resemble those sweeping women's accessories worn at the throat) serve no function, but they earn their keep by looking dramatic.



REMEMBER

Window treatments can be seen from the streetside (see Figure 15-2). Make sure your window treatments enhance curb appeal and meet community standards (if you have a homeowners' association).

FIGURE 15-2:
Window treatments enhance curb appeal at designer John Lyle's country house.



*Photograph courtesy of John Lyle (www.johnlyledesign.com);
photograph by Mark Roskams*

Supporting roles

Hardware for curtains has always played a vital supporting role. Increasingly hardware vies for attention, if not stardom. Certainly, if the rod (and perhaps rings) and finials are to be visible, consider their style as an important part of the overall curtain design.

The variety of styles related to historic styles and periods, as well as Contemporary design, is almost limitless. Finding the perfect curtain rod is only a matter of time. Because rods rest on movable brackets, they adjust easily to any height (and width) called for in your design.

Tiebacks (soft tassels, ribbons, and cords) and *holdbacks* (self-fabric cuffs, hooks, and knobs) keep curtains held back away from the view. Often, they're designed to match rods and finials. Make sure their design is compatible with the window treatment's overall design.

Trims, available in drapery and fabric shops, add great beauty and interest to both readymade and custom-made curtains. The assortment of *gimps* (pliable flat braids), cords (in varying thicknesses), tassels, and more can seem daunting. Allow time to consider all the possibilities, and don't rush to judgment.

Don't spend too much time getting hung up on window treatment terminology. Instead, leave time to consider how many different things you can hang at your window:

- » If privacy isn't a problem, but softness is, hang just curtains of lace, cotton, nylon, silk, or some other sheer fabric.
- » Place a curtain — sheer, tieback, or draw — over a (Venetian) blind.
- » Hang a sheer curtain beneath a chintz, silk, velvet, linen, or other draw drapery.
- » Hang draw draperies over thin-slat blinds or an old-fashioned roller shade.
- » Hang draw draperies alone on a decorative pole with fantastic finials.
- » Top curtains — draw or tieback — with short, purely decorative overdraperies known as *swags* and *jabots*.
- » Top a thin-slat blind or roller shade with swags, which drape over just the top of the window, and long or short jabots, which hang on the sides of windows.
- » Top any or all these window treatments with a cornice or valance.

You can see that the variations are practically endless, especially when you combine these elements with more Contemporary window blinds and shades that look like accordion-pleated curtains.



TIP

If you're designing your own window treatments, don't hesitate to use Country-casual fabrics in a fancy, three-curtain and valance window treatment in a dressy or formal Country room. The surprise works magic.



TIP

And, just to be fair, don't be shy about using a lustrous silk fabric for simple, tie-back curtains. This look is especially terrific when the silk is in a pink-and-white gingham check.

Going to great lengths

How long should curtains or draperies be? Generally, the longer the curtain or drapery, the more dignified, dressy, and formal the look. Shorter lengths always imply a casual, relaxed, and informal mood. The decision is yours. Take a look at Figure 15-3, and then read the following guidelines to find the style that's right for you.



WARNING

- » In formal or dressy rooms, curtains should just touch the floor.
- » A romantic room deserves elegant, extra-long curtains that pool or puddle on the floor.
- » Curtains to the sill, or to the bottom of the window trim (called the *apron*), look great and are practical in a kitchen.
- » Never hang curtains of any length near a stove.
- » Dens or family rooms gain dignity from draw draperies or curtains that reach the floor.
- » Curtains that stop short of the floor, ending at the top of floor moldings, look awkward. If curtains are hung too high, simply lower them (if possible) to solve the problem.

FIGURE 15-3: Dressy or casual, curtain lengths add to the room's mood.

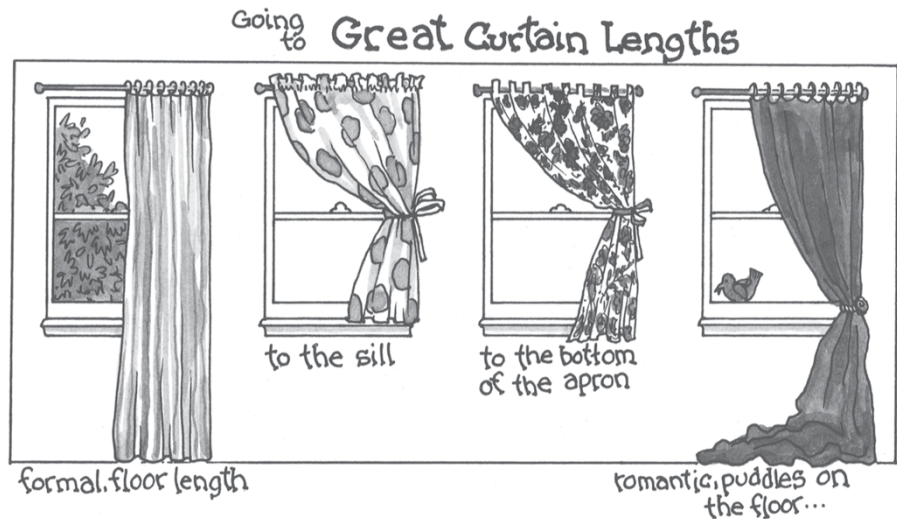


Illustration by Elizabeth Kurtzman

Not all windows are beautiful. Fortunately, draperies can help hide flaws. Try these solutions for the following questions:

- » **Window too short?** Attaching rods just below the ceiling molding and hanging long, to-the-floor curtains make the window look taller and more elegant.
- » **Window awkwardly long?** Add a deep cornice or valance above draperies with a bold horizontal pattern. Create further distraction by adding a horizontal line in the form of a strongly contrasting louvered shutter.
- » **Window too narrow?** Extend curtain rods beyond the window and hang draperies so they barely cover the frame, leaving as much glass exposed as possible, all of which makes a narrow window seem wider.
- » **Window too wide?** A huge window wall can overpower a room. Break up the space by hanging several panels across the window. They can hang straight, or be tied back in pairs. If draperies must be drawn for privacy, let the panels hang straight, and rig drawstrings so that the panels close as though they're separate pairs of draperies.

Creating Special Effects

If you want privacy, but you don't want to cover up your light source, consider the following alternatives to traditional window treatments:

- » **Etched or frosted glass:** This solution provides a degree of privacy but lets in plenty of light.
- » **Window films:** Perfect for windows or door surrounds, privacy films can cut down on peering eyes, UV light while adding effects like blackout, designs, one-way mirrors, rain looks, rainbows, stained glass, and stripes. Some use adhesive, while others are static cling (great for renters!).
- » **Stained glass:** Stained glass provides a sense of privacy, hides ugly views, and gives you something beautiful to admire. If you've found a treasure at the flea market, for example, you can hang the panel over the original pane.
- » **Glass block:** The Contemporary alternative to stained, etched, or frosted glass, glass block hides unsightly views and filters light beautifully, while providing a bit of privacy.



TIP

If privacy isn't a problem, simply hang a grapevine wreath or silk flower garland above the window.

DRESSING UP WINDOWS IN A JIFFY

Do you need window pizzazz in a hurry? Try some of the following ideas:

- Add silk flowered vines — especially roses. Artfully drape them across the top of a window. Just don't be stingy — buy several strands for lush fullness.
- Adorn a (clean) fishnet across a window by the sea.
- Craft a faux valance by cutting a plastic tablecloth to shape and then taping it (on the backside) to a rod.
- Create a faux valance by nailing crossed oars across the top of a window in a beach house.
- Dangle a strand of Mardi Gras beads, hippie style, across a small bathroom window.
- Drape a rectangular tablecloth (folded in half lengthwise) over a thick, decorated pole. Six or more inches from one side of the pole, hang a long folded length of ribbon across the pole with loose ends hanging below the cloth. Gather the ribbon ends and pull them up until the cloth begins to swag, and then tie the ribbon into a bow. Repeat on the opposite side. The result looks like a balloon shade.
- Flank a bathroom window with discarded mirrored bifold doors — they reflect the light and add sparkle and glamour.
- Fold butcher's paper (it looks like a paper bag) into accordion pleats, punch holes through the pleats (on one end only), and push a curtain rod through, gathering it gracefully as you create a cafe curtain. (You need a length of paper two to three times the width of your window.)
- Fold colorful dinner-size napkins in half on the diagonal and drape them, pointed side down, over a thick, stained or painted, wooden pole. (Use enough napkins to cover the width of the pole.) This technique is great for a kitchen or breakfast nook.
- Glue seashells directly onto the window frame of a summer cottage.
- Hang a lace tablecloth, either running a narrow rod through the lacework or using pinch clips.
- Hang a wooden plaque with an interesting painted scene or pattern across the top of the window.
- Hinge old doors to create standing shutters to flank a window. Choose plain or paneled doors to suit your scheme.
- Put *grommets* (donut-shaped pieces of metal) into one end of a wool plaid blanket. Run lengths of grosgrain ribbon (long enough to finish in a bow) through the grommets and tie them to a wooden pole or tree branch.

(continued)

(continued)

- Line your too-flat window with tall bookcases and hang tiny mirrors down the inside of the bookcases to reflect the sunlight.
- Make *sheet* curtains to match your bedding. Just buy extra flat sheets (two to serve as curtain panels) to *shirr* (gather) on a wooden rod and tie back at either side of a regular double-hung (not too wide) window. To create a curtain rod pocket with a narrow header, sew a seam $\frac{3}{4}$ inch from the top of the sheets' 4-inch hem, and then gather the panel over a wood rod. We plan on 100 percent fullness, so we buy sheets (twin, queen, or king) two times the width of the window.
- Open your window to the season by stripping off all treatments and adding a few glass shelves to hold colorful glass bottles.
- Paint window trims in a dashing, contrasting color. Leave well enough alone, or take this treatment one step further by painting a few flat baskets in the same or even wilder colors and arranging them over the top of the window for added impact.
- Pierce a fascinating pattern into a sheet of tin, and fit over your window and frame (if desired) for a window that isn't an egress and has no redeeming view. This idea is great with lodge-look and other rustic interiors.
- Prop a salvaged iron gate across your window for a beautiful pattern that doesn't obstruct light or view.
- Put those antique *antimacassars* (crocheted and knitted arm covers) to work as a valance. Drape them over your rod, or clip them on with pinch clips that come in white and various metal colors to match your rod.

IN THIS CHAPTER

- » Understanding general, task, and accent lighting
- » Designing lighting for every room
- » Getting professional help
- » Picking stylish fixtures, shades, and controls

Chapter 16

Livening Up Lighting

You don't have to know everything about lighting or spend tons of money in order to make rooms look light and lively. You do need to know the basics about functional and decorative lighting — and how to get help for planning and buying lighting.

In this chapter, you find all the information you need to design your lighting on a room-by-room basis. In addition, we help you figure out which types of fixtures to use and which kinds of controls you need for the lights. Whatever your lighting needs, you can find answers to your questions here.

Understanding Lighting Basics

When Thomas Edison invented the first light bulb in 1879, function was what he had in mind. Today, though, we use lighting for practical purposes, but also as a form of decoration.

Lighting is complicated by a number of factors, including the following:

- » The colors of walls and furnishings
- » The size of the space
- » Your decorating goals



You may want to consult a lighting consultant certified by the American Lighting Association (ALA; <https://alalighting.com>). The website offers up-to-the-minute information, locations of certified showrooms, and a free booklet.

Functional lighting

Functional lighting provides illumination to keep you out of the dark, indicate where activities take place, and control the flow of people. For example, chandeliers signify where major events like dining take place.

Lighting needs vary from room to room. A kitchen needs different lighting from a living room, for example. The level, type, and *color temperature* of light (how warm or cold it is — specified on light bulb labels), as well as how the light is delivered, all play an important role in a lighting scheme.

Demands change from room to room, as Figure 16-1 demonstrates.

- » In Figure 16-1A, functional, flexible light consists of a recessed halogen light (1), accent lights (2, 3), a ceiling fixture (4), and a task light (5).
- » In Figure 16-1B, halogen lights (1) balance fluorescents (2), and under-counter strips produce task light (3).
- » In Figure 16-1C, glamorous grooming is made possible by recessed lights (1), Hollywood-style vanity lights (2), and vapor-proof shower/tub fixtures (3).

FIGURE 16-1:
Lighting demands
change from
room to room.

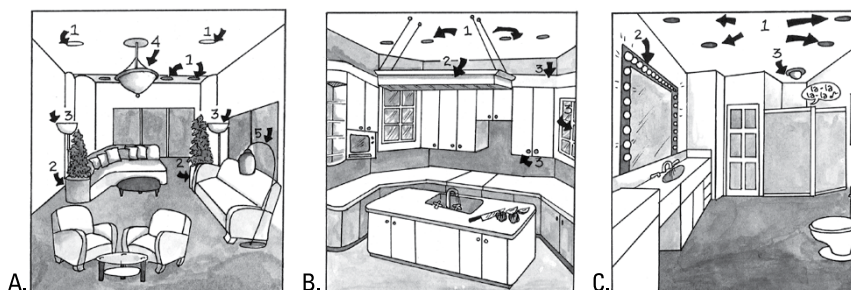


Illustration by Elizabeth Kurtzman

Decorative lighting

Decorative lighting creates *mood* (an overall feeling of serenity or playfulness) and *meaning* (communication; sometimes this includes signage, such as EXIT). Flat,

functional lighting (such as the kind in your office) puts people on the alert. Decorative lighting, on the other hand, brings out the shape of objects, the “feel” of texture, and important keynotes.

Choosing light levels and locations

A decorative lighting scheme has variation in light levels and sources that indicate what rooms are for (dim lights in rooms for sleeping, bright lights in playrooms) or what a room’s focal point is.

Create focal points with chandeliers and pendants. In a dining room, for example, a chandelier placed over a table draws attention with its soft upward-cast light. (Chandeliers are Traditional.) A pendant light used over a table, however, casts a more concentrated light downward and out. (Pendants are Contemporary.)

Designing decorative lighting

To create a plan, consider what, where, and when activities take place. Lighting needs to vary its intensity to accommodate multiple activities that occur in a single room. For example, your kitchen may be your favorite place to cook, read, do your hobbies, watch TV, and entertain. Would you want the same level of light for a party that you want for mopping the floor?



TIP

Lighting stores and home remodeling centers have trained personnel who can steer you toward your best possible lighting choices. Bring your floor plans and other decorating notes with you when you consult a lighting expert.

Lighting Up Your Life

Start planning your lighting with a floor plan (see Chapter 3). Include windows, doors, furniture placement, locations of electrical outlets and switches, and any installed fixtures. Record your activities and special needs. Having this information all spelled out helps, whether you’re working alone or you’re working with a lighting specialist.



TIP

A lighting fixture should be conveniently close, and so should its on/off switches! Take full advantage of multiple locations for on/off switches. Consider smart-phone and remote control devices, too.

Illuminating logically

Your room's architecture and design, its uses, and its users determine your lighting needs. Every room should have enough fixtures to cast adequate light, leaving no large areas of dark shadow or glaring hot spots. Consider a few basic questions:

- » Where do you need overall light?
- » Where do you need stronger light?
- » How many fixtures do you need?
- » What types of lighting fixtures do you require?
- » Where do you want the light coming from — down from the ceiling, up from a lamp, or both?
- » What can you afford?

Focusing on aesthetics

Lighting design involves choosing fixtures that are good-looking, throw light in the most desirable fashion, and have the right kind of bulb for the job (halogens, fluorescents, or incandescents). For tips on picking the right fixture, see “Picking Perfect Fixtures” later in this chapter. Ask yourself the following questions:

- » Do I want to highlight my walls' texture?
- » Do I want to spotlight certain objects?
- » Do I want to focus on a specific location in the room?
- » Do I want to raise, lower, or create flexible lighting patterns?

Note all your ideas on your floor plan. The more information you have, the better job a salesperson can do in helping you.

Lighting 101

Lighting design is broken down into three kinds of illumination: general lighting, task lighting, and accent lighting. Mix all three types to achieve *decorative lighting*. Figure 16-2 shows you some of the many lighting choices.

FIGURE 16-2:
Types of lighting fixtures include
(a) traditional table lamps,
(b) wall sconces,
(c) pendants,
(d) floor lamps,
(e) torchiers,
(f) chandeliers,
(g) theme table lamps,
(h) swing-arm lamps, and
(i) desk lamps.



Illustration by Elizabeth Kurtzman

General lighting

General lighting (also known as *ambient lighting*) illuminates an entire space for visibility and safety. Light bounces off walls and ceilings to cover as much area as possible. General lighting can come from up-lights or down-lights:

- » Up-lights point illumination toward the ceiling. Up-light fixtures include torchiers and wall sconces.
- » Down-lights cast light down from the ceiling or wall. Popular down-lights include recessed lights (*cans*) and track lights.

Some lights, such as table and floor lamps, are both up- and down-lights because they cast light toward both the ceiling and the floor.

See the upcoming section “Planning General Lighting” for more information about how to successfully illuminate an entire room or space.

Task lighting

Task lighting (also known as *work lighting*) illuminates smaller areas where more intense light is needed. Task light should be three times as bright as general lighting. Overly bright work lamps won’t make up for a dimly lit room (instead, you may develop eyestrain). Using higher light-per-watt (LPW) bulbs in other fixtures or increasing the number of fixtures to boost general lighting fixes this problem.

Good task lighting fixture choices are well-positioned recessed lights, track lighting, pendants, table or floor lamps, and under-cabinet lighting strips.

Accent lighting

Accent lighting adds brilliant shimmer to make your precious objects, paintings, sculptures, and outstanding architectural features stand out. Use a bulb that’s no more than three times as bright as the surrounding general light. Position the fixture so that the light doesn’t block your line of sight so that no glaring reflections bounce back.

If you’re using track lighting for *wall washing* (lighting a nontextured wall) or *wall grazing* (lighting a textured wall), aim the beam of light at a 30-degree angle from the vertical to prevent glare and hot spots.



TIP

Light-emitting diodes (LEDs) and halogen lights makes the best accent light because of their intensity and brilliance. (See the “Buying the Right Bulbs” section, later in this chapter, for information about halogen lights.)

Planning General Lighting

Figure out general lighting first, because all other lighting (task and accent) must be in balance with it. Some rooms, such as kitchens, require stronger lighting than others. Larger rooms need more light fixtures than smaller ones. Don’t rely on a couple of strong lights to illuminate a big room — you’ll end up with uneven, stress-inducing lighting.

Creating contrast

The contrast of light and shadow is the key to lighting. Reasonable contrast is desirable for two reasons:

- » Contrasting light creates visual interest and mood.
- » Differing levels of light let the eye rest as it moves from bright to dark.



TIP

Plan for two to three areas of stronger light to generate a focal point in a room. (The larger the room, the larger these areas will be, and the greater number of fixtures you need.)

Avoiding glare

Direct glare is more than ugly; it can cause accidents. Keep lights from shining directly into eyes.

Two types of glare cause aesthetic problems. A *hot spot* is a bright spot of light reflected onto an object. *Veiled glare* happens when a light is placed above a flat, glossy horizontal surface (such as a table) and the light bounces up. Replace your old bulbs with coated or antiglare bulbs to fix the problem.

Balancing light

The chief problem created by windows is a misbalance of light. Some people believe they don't need lighting in a sunny room because the sunlight will distribute itself. Wrong! Instead, they find that one area is too bright, while others are downright dark. Because the eye needs time to adjust to lower light levels, you may feel confused when moving from one area to the next. Control excess sunlight with shades (see Chapter 15).



TIP

Because their components allow for adjusting, LEDs can mimic sunlight's hue and intensity. Consider replacing lighting with LED. If you're stuck with existing fluorescent lighting, you can make your room seem more natural by bringing in other types of lighting. Mixing incandescent, halogen, and fluorescent bulbs may best simulate sunlight. (See the next section for details about each type.) Avoid using fluorescents alone, because they tend to emit narrower spectrums of light than incandescents and halogens; colors may not be true, skin tones may look dull, and the room may look unnatural. When picking fluorescent bulbs, make sure the color rendering index (CRI) is between 80 and 100. (The closer a bulb's CRI is to 100, the more it appears like sunlight.)

Buying the Right Bulbs

How well your lighting fixture performs depends on the light source — the bulb. Different types of bulbs produce different lighting effects and different electric bills.

Light is measured in terms of *wattage* (the amount of electricity used), *lumens* (the amount of light produced), and *foot-candles* (the amount of light that reaches your subject).

You're probably already familiar with the main categories of bulbs:

» **Incandescent:** Incandescent bulbs are the most widely used in homes. They produce a pleasant, yellow-tinged white light. They come in an array of wattages and shapes such as *general* (A; standard bulb), *globe* (small, round), and *decorative* (flame, teardrop).

If you like a more controlled beam of light, use a reflectorized bulb that has a mirror-like coating that aims that light forward. Reflector (R) and parabolic reflector (PAR) bulbs cast two and four times the amount of light on the subject as a general service (A) bulb does, respectively.

» **Fluorescent:** Used in rooms that demand lots of light, these are the most energy-efficient and least expensive source of lighting available. They use only 20 percent to 35 percent as much electricity as incandescent bulbs and last up to 20 times longer.

You can get compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs) that screw into regular lamp sockets so you can turn any fixture into a more economical light source.

» **Halogen:** Halogen lights produce a brilliant white light (with more lumens per watt than incandescents), and the bulbs tend to last longer. They also maintain maximum efficiency over their lifetime. Use them in wall sconces, torchiers, mini-cans, pendants, and track and recessed lighting fixtures because of their superior beam control compared to PAR-type bulbs.

» **LED:** LEDs turn electricity into light. Their efficiency, life span, and versatility are superior to incandescent, fluorescent, and halogen. On the market since the '90s, LEDs are expected to take over the market because of their low energy consumption and versatility. Smart bulbs can connect via Bluetooth to your mobile device or be voice controlled, too.



TIP



TIP

Many light stores have the various types of bulbs on display so you can see before you buy.



WARNING

Don't let light bulbs come in close proximity to fabrics or flammable surfaces. The heat of halogen or incandescent bulbs can set some materials used in furnishings (such as foam rubber) on fire.

Table 16-1 provides direction for choosing the right kind of light bulb.

TABLE 16-1 **Picking the Right Bulb**

Bulb Type	Emits Light That Is	Brightens	Mutes
Incandescent	Yellow white	Warm colors	Cool colors
Halogen	Brilliant white	All colors	None
Cool white fluorescent	Blue white	Cool colors	Warm colors
Cool white deluxe fluorescent	White	Most colors	Almost none
Warm white fluorescent	Light amber	Skin tones	Red, blue
Warm white deluxe fluorescent	White	Warm colors	Blue, green
LED	Very warm white, daylight, cool white	Varies	Varies

Picking Perfect Fixtures

Fixtures throw light up, down, to the sides, in focused spots, or in diffused areas. Some lights function only as general, task, or accent lighting. Others are more flexible depending on the bulb's wattage.



REMEMBER

Most light fixture types are available in incandescent, fluorescent, compact fluorescent, or halogen. Many fixtures can be adapted to use an alternate bulb. Replacement halogen bulbs (available at retail and lighting stores) are designed to go right into a lamp that normally uses an incandescent bulb.

Ceiling fixtures

Ceiling fixtures throw light down toward the walls and floor. Some fixtures let light bounce up toward the ceiling as well. Practical for illuminating wide areas of space efficiently, these general lighting fixtures are available in incandescent, halogen, fluorescent, and compact fluorescent models.

Chandeliers

Chandeliers, a type of pendant light, generally direct light upward to bounce off the ceiling. Traditionally used in dining rooms, living rooms, and entryways, they look as though they're holding candles, but they're wired and fitted with flame-shaped lights (either incandescent or halogen). We put a beautiful, small chandelier in a gemlike kitchen in a Chicago high-rise. Consider hanging one in your bathroom for an unexpected pleasure.

Pendants

A pendant light — a light fixture suspended from the ceiling over a table or work area — casts light downward. It can provide either general or task lighting. Pendants come in a wide variety of styles and can vary from a single halogen bulb to a multi-bulb creation.

Portables

Portable lighting is a large category that encompasses anything that can be carried, such as table lamps, floor lamps, clamp-on lights, and torchiers. Depending on the bulb's type, portable lamps can furnish general, task, or accent light. Upright cans, mini-reflector spotlights, desk lights, piano lights, and painting lights provide only accent or task lighting.

Recessed lighting

Recessed fixtures can provide general, task, or accent lighting. The actual light is set into the ceiling and is virtually inconspicuous, because only the trim shows at the surface. If you have a low-ceiling area, recessed lighting is a better choice than a ceiling fixture. The fixtures are sometimes referred to as *can lights* because they look like tin cans. They're available as down-lights, adjustable accent lights, and wall washers. If you're using them for accent lighting, make sure that the bulb position is adjustable.

Tracks

Track lighting provides general, task, and, accent lighting. It can even serve all three functions at the same time, if you have enough lights with high enough wattage. Incandescent, halogen, and compact fluorescent models are available. Very flexible and modern, these lights can be moved, swiveled, rotated, and aimed at individual points along the track. Need more light? Hang pendants or chandeliers from the track.



TIP

STAYING ON TRACK

Track lighting is ideal as accent lighting. Any time you change artwork or want to make a new lighting statement, you can reposition the fixtures along the track. Track lighting can illuminate art, wash nontextured surfaces with light (called *wall washing*), or enhance dramatic textured walls (called *wall grazing*).

Consider these rules and tips for getting the most out of track lighting:

- Affix the track in the right place. For ceilings up to 9 feet high, mount the track 2 to 3 feet from the point where the wall and ceiling meet. For ceiling heights between 9 and 11 feet, place the track lighting 4 feet away from the wall.
- Consider flexible track with which you can create curves that follow or repeat a pattern on the floor or in furniture (a curving kitchen island, for example).
- Consider using flexible track lighting with beautifully colored lamps in lieu of a chandelier.
- Mount the track closer to the wall (at a distance of 6 to 12 inches) for wall grazing than you would for wall washing, and aim the lights downward. Wall grazing brings out the best in brick or stone.
- Use one fixture per object to light art. Place fixtures at an equal distance from each other, if possible. Aim fixtures at a 30-degree angle to prevent hot spots and glare.

Under-cabinet and under-shelf fixtures

Use under-cabinet and under-shelf fixtures as task and accent lighting. They're great under kitchen cabinets to light the countertop or work area. They're also good for curio cabinets, bookshelves, or any other spot that needs a highlight. These lights are available in incandescent, halogen, and fluorescent; in miniature track; and in strips of low-voltage minilights.

Vanity lighting strips

Vanity lighting strips with gently glowing incandescent globes provide task lighting for grooming. Great for applying makeup, they create a professional Hollywood makeup studio look.

Wall-mounted fixtures

Use wall-mounted fixtures to furnish general, task, or accent lighting. They come in a variety of designs and range from swinging-arm lamps to wall sconces.

Wall-mounted lights are terrific when floor or table space is too limited for lamps. They can also emphasize pretty wall surfaces with up- or down-light and de-emphasize an uninteresting ceiling.

Lighting Your Home, Room by Room

Think of lighting your entire house adequately: Plan room by room. As you move through the house, you should see no dark places — especially in hallways and stairwells.



REMEMBER

Station the light controls at all entry and exit points, particularly in hallways, so you can turn lights on or off as you move into a new area. (Alternately, use motion-sensitive lights that turn themselves on and off as you move from space to space.) Think safety first! Most areas have updated building codes that require a switch for every entry or exit area.

Hallways

Safe hallway lighting should be a happy medium between the most softly and brightly lit rooms in the house. Hallway and entryway lighting may simply consist of some up-lights that cast indirect light. If an up-light isn't enough, use a stronger bulb or install extra lights. A nice chandelier isn't a bad option. If you opt for a higher-watt ceiling light, install a dimmer switch so you don't blind yourself when you get up in the middle of the night.



TIP

If a hallway is long, space lighting evenly. Wall sconces placed at regular intervals look dramatic, create a pleasant sense of rhythm, and seem to furnish the space.

Stairways

To safely light stairways, avoid *flat light* (light that falls straight from above). At the foot of the stairs, use a strong directional light to increase the contrast between risers and treads. At the top of the stairwell, use a down-light. You can also place strip lights at each riser for 24-hour illumination. Concealing lighting at the handrail is another way to keep stairs safe. Position controls at the foot and head of the stairs.

Bathrooms

Two key issues for lighting bathrooms are safety and function. Keep general lighting bright, as well as task lighting (for grooming). Balance overhead down-lights with up-lights. Don't position fixtures and bulbs to interfere with splashing water or wet hands.

Small bathrooms may only need up-lights positioned over a mirror or strip lights around the mirror. Mount decorative wall brackets at both sides of the mirror and add one at the top if you need additional light. Position wall brackets 60 inches off the floor. Use warm white fluorescents for energy-efficient lighting. Install theatrical globe lights around the mirror.

Larger bathrooms may require ceiling fixtures — use warm white fluorescent or incandescent bulbs. Don't forget to include a night-light that you can leave on 24 hours a day for maximum safety. Be sure to add safety features like grab bars, too.



TIP

Use mirrors freely to help bounce light around the room. For applying makeup and grooming, use vanity lights (globes) around the mirror to create a shadow-free grooming environment.

Tub and shower enclosures need enclosed, damp-location, recessed down-lights in the ceiling. (A shower light is a must, to prevent everything from shaving nicks to stumbles.) For added heat, install an infrared heat lamp.

Bedrooms



TIP

Bedrooms need general lighting that's not overly bright. Task and accent lights can do more of the lighting work. Lamps placed on tables or nightstands cast ample light, but make sure the lamps are tall enough to keep light from glaring directly at the level of your eye. If glare is a problem, place a stack of coffee table books under the light or buy a taller shade.

For a bedroom shared by a couple, plan for separate task lighting with separate controls. Position controls on either side of the bed to make it possible for one person to read while the other sleeps. Turning lights on and off is also easier when you have more than one control panel.

Swivel-arm wall lamps used on each side of the bed save valuable nightstand space, and some are conveniently touch-controlled. If space is at a premium, use recessed lights or pendant lights fitted with a diffuser that prevents glare.



TIP

Light the interior of closets with recessed or surface-mounted lighting to make early morning and nighttime dressing easier. Door-activated on/off switches are most convenient.

ADDING PIZAZZ WITH DECORATIVE LAMPS

Selecting the right lamp that adds to your overall decorating mood can be tricky. Keep these points in mind:

- **Check the lamp's height and scale.** Relate the lamp's height and scale to that of the furniture that it will sit on (such as a table) and near (such as a sofa). If you already own a lamp that's a bit too short for your table/sofa combination, do what the pros do: Place the lamp on a stack of attractive hardback books. If you're shopping for a new lamp, measure first and avoid that problem!
- **Decide whether your table lamp should attract attention or go unnoticed.** The answer depends on the surroundings. For a sofa covered in strongly colored and patterned upholstery, select a plain (but beautifully colored) lamp. For a plain sofa, consider a lamp with strong pattern or personality. For strongly thematic rooms (Western lodge, for example), your lamp can underscore that theme.
- **If you're buying a new lampshade, take the lamp to the store.** Trying the shade on the lamp is the tried-and-true technique for knowing whether a lampshade is just right.
- **If a lampshade doesn't seem to look right on your lamp, check the *harp* (the metal piece that the shade rests on).** If it's the right width but it hangs too low or too high, the harp may be the wrong size. The right size harp makes all the difference in the world. If in doubt, try several size harps and shades until you have the right combination.
- **Lamps flanking a sofa don't have to be identical, but they should have same or similar color bases and same or similar shades.**
- **Lamps don't have to be identical throughout the room.** How boring would that be? Sizes should vary from mini (on a secretary or bookshelf) to medium (on a sofa-library table) to tall (on low end tables). But they should relate in some way, such as by reflecting the same style or period (especially if they're different colors and materials).
- **Lamps should be carefully placed throughout the room so as not to create a sense of jumble and confusion.**
- **Don't let lamps block important views and vistas, indoors or out.**

Children's bedrooms



TIP

When lighting young children's bedrooms, decorate for fun, but think safety first. Here are some tips:

- » Include lamps and other lighting fixtures that are playful and fun. Just make sure that they're not breakable.
- » Install track lights, which are great sources of light for task and accent lighting, with a dimmer switch.
- » Install light bulbs with a built-in backup filament. If the main filament burns out, the second filament lights up. Specialty light bulb stores carry these bulbs.
- » Keep a wall-mounted flashlight that your child can reach for in emergencies.
- » Make sure lighting is adequate, but not so bright that there is glare, for children who work at computers.
- » Place individual lamps with independent switches for bunk beds.
- » Provide a nightlight with a built-in sensor that turns on when light levels are low. Place these lights in hallways and bathrooms as well.
- » Simplify turning on overhead lights by placing controls at kids' reach level — about 30 inches from the floor — and by using easy-to-operate rocker or slide controls.
- » Take extra precautions with wires throughout the room. Make sure that lamp cords are neat and out of the traffic flow (but, for safety reasons, don't tuck them under carpeting).
- » Use only bulbs recommended by the fixture's manufacturer. Make sure halogen fixtures, which get hot to the touch, are surrounded by a guard.
- » Use smart light bulbs with programmable microchips that gradually dim the bulb over a period of time. Check your specialty light bulb store.



WARNING

Dining rooms

Nothing kills the appetite like a too-bright light. On the other hand, have you ever been afraid to taste food because you couldn't see it? Try these ideas for adding just the right lighting to your dining room:

- » Accent artwork. Put a soft focus on it with recessed adjustable fixtures or halogen track lights.

- » Create a focal point and add glamour to the dining room. Hang a chandelier in the center of the room. If the dining table is in the center of the room, hang the fixture 30 inches above the tabletop (allow a clearance on each side of 6 inches).
- » Focus on the china cabinet. Install strips of halogen minilights under the shelves in a china cabinet or hutch to highlight your china and collectibles.
- » Play up your buffet. Hang wall sconces on either side and then place recessed lights 24 to 36 inches apart from the ceiling above it.
- » Tout any table, whether in the center of the room or not, by suspending a pendant light that is 12 inches narrower than the tabletop 30 inches above the table. Or position a ring of four track lights or recessed halogen lights over a table to make table settings sparkle.

Kitchens



TIP

With all those knives, open flames, and hot pots, kitchens are dangerous places. Let there be tons of light where you need it. Consider these pointers for picking lights and placing them where they'll do the best job:

- » Center halogen pendants over bars and counters.
- » Install individual recessed down-lights as task lighting at the sink and range. (Use compact fluorescent bulbs for energy efficiency.)
- » Make sure the fluorescent light in dimmer areas (far away from windows and natural light) equals the brighter sunlit areas of the kitchen.
- » Mount fluorescent strips (12 to 48 inches long) close to the front edge of cabinetry to avoid glare. Under-cabinet lighting is a must for food prep. Lighting should cover two-thirds the length of the counter.
- » Place additional strips of mini-incandescent lights in soffits and other concealed locations to highlight cabinetry and add a warm atmosphere to the kitchen.
- » Position low-voltage minilights over, under, or inside kitchen cabinets that have glass panes.
- » Remember that overhead general lighting — with energy-efficient fluorescent tubes — is the easiest way to supply diffused light.
- » Suspend pendant lighting 30 inches above an island's surface.

Home offices

Home offices are workplaces, and effective lighting is a must. First, think of glare-free lighting strategies. Next, be careful to eliminate harsh contrast. Consider these tips:



TIP

- » Illuminate credenzas that have a cabinet above them with under-cabinet lighting. Use fluorescent bulbs and place them close to the front of the cabinet to prevent glare. If your credenza has no cabinet above it, add a pair of table lamps. If your credenza is a heavy work area, augment table lamps with wall sconces or flanking torchiers.
- » Place two or more large, energy-efficient fluorescents to the front and back of the desk area for well-diffused general lighting that eliminates shadows.
- » Position adjustable portable lamps to the side and rear of computer screens to reduce glare.
- » Use accent lighting to create pleasant, homey areas in the office.

Living rooms

If you have a live-in living room, make lighting a decorating priority. In this section, we provide some ways to help your lighting make big differences in the way you see and are seen in this important space:



TIP

- » Accent handsome houseplants with an up-light can fixture. Place the fixture between the wall and the plant to create a dramatic silhouette. Don't let the fixture come in contact with the plant.
- » Add interest to a long, boring wall by creating a scalloped effect of light, with wall-washing lights placed so their arcs of light gently overlap.
- » Bring out the beautiful textures in stone or brick fireplaces or walls in your living room with recessed lights.
- » Highlight a pretty painting with halogen track lighting.
- » Place a reading lamp behind every reader's shoulder (40 to 42 inches above the floor). To avoid glare, the bottom of the shade should be a little lower than eye level.

5

Tackling Kitchens, Baths, Home Offices, and Media Rooms

IN THIS PART . . .

Make your kitchen personal and functional.

Design a bathroom that holds up to wear-and-tear, while serving as an oasis for relaxation.

Create a functional and beautiful home office.

Decorate a media room that makes screening your favorite shows a pleasure.

- » Sticking to a budget
- » Measuring your space
- » Furnishing your kitchen
- » Kicking your kitchen up a notch

Chapter **17**

Cooking Up Dream Kitchens

Your kitchen — whether the cook’s haven or the family hangout — should function well and look great. With so much going on in today’s kitchen, designing for function may mean light remodeling, updating electrical outlets for smartphones, or bringing in more furnishings. It’s not strictly about style anymore. In this chapter, we give you all the information you need to take your kitchen to the next level.

Considering Your Wallet

Making architectural changes is more costly than making decorative changes. Sometimes you don’t have a choice but to make major changes. For example, if your stove and refrigerator are more than 8 feet from the sink, remodeling is mandatory.

Luckily, most kitchen decorating doesn’t require applying for a building permit. Most projects involve only light remodeling, such as changing floor coverings, cabinets, countertops, wall coverings, and so on. Make these changes before you buy new furniture, curtains, and accessories.

Your budget and priorities are key factors in deciding how to decorate your kitchen. The following sections contain guidelines for helping you make the most of your budget.

Spending the dough

Figure the cost for lightly remodeling a 10-foot by 12-foot kitchen at up to \$10,000 depending on the cabinets you select. (Industry experts say you'll get back 80 percent to 87 percent of what you spend if you sell within a year.) See Table 17-1 for estimates of cost breakdowns, determined by the NKBA.

TABLE 17-1 **Estimated Allocations for a Kitchen Decorating Project**

Specific Project	Percentage Allocated
Cabinets	48 percent
Labor	16 percent
Countertops	13 percent
Appliances	8 percent
Interior design	6 percent
Fixtures	4 percent
Flooring	4 percent
Lighting	1 percent

Cutting corners

Reducing some budget allocations so you can spend more on other things is smart. For example, doing the work yourself (painting, laying tile, and so on) can mean sizable savings. Opting for less expensive flooring may make that French-door refrigerator possible.



TIP

Consider ways to save on kitchen cabinets, which make up almost half of a budget. Using your existing cabinets will save you a boodle. (If your cabinets need a face-lift, see the sidebar “Giving your cabinets an extreme makeover,” later in this chapter.) If their best days are behind them, look at what’s available from Habitat for Humanity and similar sources. Apply this same approach to all the items on your kitchen design list. Don’t hesitate to ask the experts to show you more ways to stretch your budget. Saving where you can allows for upgrades and luxuries.

If you decide to buy new cabinets, there are three major ways to save. Don't buy two if one works, because two 24-inch cabinets cost more than one 48-inch cabinet. Choose less expensive veneered, flat-center paneled doors instead of more costly solid wood, raised panel doors. Forgo luxury items, such as glass doors, decorative plate racks, and fancy trims and moldings.

Determining Your Dimensions

Before you get into your decorating, create a floor plan (see Chapter 3 for tips). Make sure you show the following items:

- » All electrical outlets, wall switches, and lighting fixtures
- » Dimensions of appliances (stove, refrigerator, freezer, microwave oven, dishwasher, and so on) and fixtures (sinks, and washer and dryer, if they're a part of your kitchen)
- » Ducts, vents, and radiators (things that may remain or may need moving in order to make room for cabinetry)
- » Plumbing and gas connections



REMEMBER

If you're planning a remodel, using a floor plan app or online planner can save you time. Some apps and online tools charge monthly fees (handy if you're doing design professionally) or one-time fees (best for do-it-yourselfers).

Finding the Right Furnishings

Don't be overwhelmed by having to choose materials for walls, floors, and ceilings, plus perhaps cabinets, countertops, appliances, furniture, dishes, and accessories. Began by going to www.kitchens.com to see new products and actual kitchen redesigns. Prices for these projects may seem a little high, but budget-saving tips are helpful. The following sections pinpoint the key elements for a great kitchen in any price range.

Characterizing cabinets

Style direction starts with cabinets. If you're buying new cabinets, select them first. To determine which cabinets are the better style for your kitchen, consider two types of cabinet construction: *face frame* and *frameless*. (Regardless of which type, buy the best quality you can afford for longevity.)

The face-frame type (partial overlay) has a solid wood frame between doors and a structural support. The frame, which is exposed around doors and drawers, has mounted exterior hinges. This type of construction is most commonly used for Traditional designs. (The doors can be opened without hardware, a savings.)

The frameless cabinet (full overlay) is commonly associated with Contemporary design. In frameless cabinets, the doors are hinged directly to the sides of the cabinet box, leaving little or no reveal. Because the doors are flush, hardware is needed.



WARNING

Not all cabinet construction is equal. Sturdily built cabinets, called *boxes*, have mortise-and-tenon joints (where one portion of the joint slides into the other), which is the strongest joinery. Look also for cross rails or corner braces that hold cabinets square and tight.

Drawers

Materials affect appearance, performance, and price. High-quality cabinetry may have 3/4-inch solid wood drawer boxes with solid wood drawer fronts, while medium- and lower-priced drawer boxes are made of 3/4-inch solid wood with veneered drawer fronts.



TIP

Aren't sure about quality? Carefully inspect a drawer. A well-made drawer contains solid hardwood sides and a plywood bottom — it feels smooth and well sanded. Check for heavy-duty slides that don't produce side-to-side movement. Drawers should allow full extension. If drawers are well made, you can usually rest assured that the cabinets are also.

Finishes tell a quality tale, too. Fine wood cabinets have no rough spots (even on undersides of drawers), no blemishes in the finish, beautiful (non-plastic) patina, and appealing color. Laminates should be bubble-free. Painted finishes should be smooth and ripple-free. Some varnishes protect like a urethane coating. Another durable kind of coating — synthetic resin — is heat-cured. Not even nail-polish remover affects that finish.

Cabinets

Ideally, buying new cabinets means you can plan a layout with specific work areas. For efficiency, choose cabinets designed for those work areas.

Position a fixed prep center near a sink for easy cleanup. Portable work centers with big casters can be rolled anywhere for use, helpful when two people are working in a small kitchen. Cook center cabinets with drawers for pots and pans make it easy to access them. For a beverage center, cabinets with adjustable shelves for glassware are helpful. Partitioned drawers for tools are helpful in various work areas. Check out all the possibilities before deciding which are best for the way you work in your kitchen.

Aren't sure about how much storage space and what cabinet sizes you need? Count and measure the items you store in your kitchen. One easy way is to line up your pots and pans and measure how many linear inches you need. Simply sum up all your measurements to get a rough answer. Remember that home improvement centers have experts to help you plan.



TIP

High ceilings in your kitchen allow you to add drama and storage of seldom-used items by stacking cabinets. Cabinets with display glass doors add glamour. (You'll need a ladder to access these high cabinets.) Place stacked cabinets opposite a high Palladian window for balance. (A *Palladian* is a large window topped by a semicircular window and flanked by two smaller, rectangular windows.) In other areas, use a variety of cabinet heights to add interest.

ESCAPING TO YOUR OWN SPECIAL ISLAND

Islands and peninsulas make great use of available floor space. They're easy to build, using stock cabinets as the base. If you can't match your new island to your old cabinets, don't worry — paint the island cabinets a contrasting color. A butcher block or table can act like an island. Add casters and move it about with ease. If possible, add a shelf below the tabletop for storage. Larger kitchens have room for two or more islands. Two small islands offer more efficient walk-around space than one large island. Some really big kitchens offer the luxury of two really big islands! Countertop materials on one or more island don't have to match one another or existing countertops. We've added a granite countertop to the island, keeping Corian for flanking counters. Function will help determine the material. (Granite and other countertop materials for your do-it-yourself island will likely be custom fabricated.)

Islands and peninsulas are usually 36 inches high — the same as a kitchen counter. If you prefer, build yours at table height and use an ordinary kitchen chair instead of a high stool for working or eating at the counter. Or make it taller (for a tall cook) or multilevel (if space allows) to suit several cooks' needs. If your peninsula is lower or higher than the kitchen counter, use a different surface for visual contrast, if you like.

The minimum width for any countertop is 15 to 18 inches, but manufacturers make 24-inch-wide countertops that extend the kitchen counter, creating a peninsula. A table-like peninsula can be 30 to 42 inches wide (the same as a standard table) or as wide as space permits.

Consider unique geometric shapes that utilize your space, including circles, triangles, ovals, Ls, and Ts. If your island isn't plumbed or wired, consider placing the island on casters so it can be moved to sinks or electrical outlets.

To augment storage in kitchens with standard built-in cabinets, consider free-standing or *unfitted* cabinetry. Also think of baker's racks, old medical cabinets from dentists' and doctors' offices, gym lockers — anything goes as long as it goes well.

Purchasing new cabinets? After finalizing your kitchen plan, take it to a home center with NKBA-certified kitchen designers to review your layout and suggest any necessary improvements. They'll help you select the right cabinet for the right task, print out a materials list, and place the order.

Countering your top

Switching that outdated countertop for a stylish one may be just the thing to make your kitchen stunning. And it may not be necessary to switch all countertops. We switched just the ceramic tile island countertop to black granite, leaving flanking charcoal gray Corian countertops. To make a decorating statement, choose from the following materials:



WARNING

- » **Butcher block:** This surface is generally used for small chopping areas because it requires care and wears down. Use it in areas such as work centers or wherever you do your slicing and dicing. One downside: It isn't the most sanitary surface available; use bleach regularly to keep it clean, and sand it down to renew the surface.
- » **Ceramic tile:** Ceramic tile is decorative and heat-resistant, but it can chip, making it an uneven work surface. Work gingerly on ceramic tile — it doesn't take kindly to chopping, pounding, or being dropped on. However, replacing a damaged tile (if you've kept a supply for this purpose) is more affordable than replacing a stone countertop. Over time, you may need to regrout.
- » **Concrete:** This material is a finer grade of concrete than that used for sidewalks. Use it in its natural state (perfect for lofts and Contemporary interiors) or let chemical stains, coloring pigments, aggregates, and epoxy coatings add the look, texture, and feel of quarry stones (perfect for Traditional interiors). It can also be stamped into patterns, including leaves and handprints, or inlaid with mosaics, fossils, pebbles, or faux jewels. For more about concrete, log on www.concretenetwork.com.
- » **Glass:** Glass and recycled glass countertops are as durable (heat-, stain-, and scratch-resistant) and as easy to maintain as stone countertops. They also cost about the same (including installation) as granite per square foot. Glass countertops can be translucent (letting light through) or opaque, and can be any combination of colored, smooth, or textured. Backlighting a translucent glass countertop with LED lighting can add drama to the space. Consider either using all glass countertops throughout or selecting an area like an island to add contemporary flair.

- » **Laminate:** Laminate, a man-made material that can look like natural stone, wood, or almost anything, comes in more colors and finishes than any other countertop material. It's also affordable. Different edge treatments and profiles (curved, right angle) provide style options that complement cabinet styles. Corian, Formica, Wilsonart and others make an astounding array of laminates.
- » **Solid surface materials:** Usually a blend of acrylic and other materials, these countertops are a popular choice because they wear well, resist staining and germs, and clean up easily. Solid surfaces are available in many colors and patterns. For a surface with natural stone character, look for combined quartz crystals with man-made materials such as Corian Quartz (www.corianquartz.com).
- » **Stainless steel:** If you like the idea of a countertop to match high-tech stainless-steel appliances, ask your countertop dealer to recommend a source. Don't expect these customized countertops to be cheap, but you may find more affordable stock sizes.
- » **Stone (granite, marble, quartzite, soapstone):** Granite and marble are long-time popular countertop surfaces. Granite is impact-resistant (don't drop breakables on it!), beautiful, and costs about the same as solid surface materials. Marble, softer than granite and not as durable, is usually used for pastry-making areas. Quartzite looks like marble but is more heat- and scratch-resistant. Soapstone, a favorite for country-style sinks and countertops, feels soapy to the touch, has a warm matte look, and develops wear flaws that many find endearing. (Check home centers and local stone sources.)
- » **Stone stand-ins (lavastone, quartz):** *Lavastone or enameled lavastone* is a glasslike stone look-alike that comes in vivid stock colors; custom colors are also available. Glazing at high temperatures makes the enameled surface nonporous and resistant to water, oils, and acids, but it does scratch. You can purchase it from Pyrolave USA (www.pyrolave.com). Quartz blends natural stones and synthetic resins for a natural stone look. It's twice as impact resistant as natural stone, but it's heat sensitive.
- » **Teak:** Teak is a viable option for countertops because it stands up to water and is hard and long wearing. Ask your countertop fabricator about its availability in your area and for advice regarding whether to finish teak or leave it in its natural state.

Stretch your countertop budget by mixing expensive with less-expensive countertop materials. For example, use pricey marble for your bake center countertop and less expensive teak for other areas.



TIP

Make a place for sipping and snacking — whether it's an island, peninsula, countertop, or table (see Figure 17-1). A welcoming kitchen — small or large — has a comfortable place to sit down for a cup of morning coffee, an afternoon tea, or a late-night snack.



FIGURE 17-1:
A wide island
countertop
provides a place
to perch.

Illustration by Elizabeth Kurtzman

Walking on fabulous floors

No matter what the style, kitchen floors have to stand up to hard wear and tear (see Figure 17-2). They should also be easy to clean and skidproof (and kid-proof doesn't hurt either). Popular flooring options include relatively inexpensive carpeting (made especially for kitchens), synthetic (vinyl or other) sheet or rolled flooring, and vinyl tiles. Hard flooring includes brick, ceramic tile, laminates, stone, and wood.

All these substances are reasonably durable. However, you may expect hard surfaces to wear longer than soft flooring. Keep in mind that:

- » Brick and stone need renewable protective finishes (sealants) to prevent them from absorbing grease and stains and to make them easier to clean.
- » Top glazes may wear away from ceramic tile. If you're concerned, consider porcelain tile, which has color throughout that won't wear off.
- » Laminate, once a wood look-alike, now also looks convincingly like stone or ceramic tile. Laminate floors are constructed for quick and easy installation

(see Chapter 13). They're relatively inexpensive. For how-to information and current pricing, go to your favorite home improvement and flooring retailers. Be wary of using laminate flooring in a wet area.

- » To increase the life of a wood floor, especially if it has a painted surface, protect it with several topcoats of polyurethane. Expect to renew it every three to five years.



FIGURE 17-2:
Wood flooring
adds warmth to
this kitchen.

Photograph courtesy of Mark Candelaria, AIA (www.candelariadesign.com); photograph by Dino Tonn

In addition to old woods — cherry, maple, oak, and pine — newer woods are showing up in trendsetting kitchens. Teak and bamboo are gaining popularity. Bamboo's unique appearance makes it a stylish and durable alternative. Be wary of installing bamboo in a wet area or in hurricane country.

Enjoying wonderful walls

The kitchen is the number one place for spills and splatters. So, even if you're not obsessed with cleanliness, cover your kitchen walls with something washable, because they're going to need washing. The following sections provide some options for kitchen wall materials. Think creatively — you may want to mix two or more of these materials.



TIP

COUNTER INTELLIGENCE

Countertop work surfaces have a big effect on a kitchen's appearance and function. If you're updating your kitchen by changing the counter, consider these tips:

- Give yourself a break. Lower the counter's height so you can sit down to do jobs that don't require standing.
- For people with special needs, install a good-looking grab bar at the countertop edge. Modern designs can double as a towel rack.
- Round or dog-ear (cut on a slant) countertop edges eliminate sharp corners.

Don't be shy about using more than one type of countertop material (marble for the bake center and laminate elsewhere, for example). If you're remodeling, break up too-long stretches of countertop by separating sections intended for different functions — change the height, interrupt sections with an appliance, or use a contrasting color on the cabinet base.

Countertops need not match the backsplash. Match them to provide greater unity; contrasting materials to add visual interest. If you're ordering stone for the countertop and want the backsplash to match, be sure your stone dealer can provide the thinner backsplash stone — especially if you plan to extend the backsplash to the ceiling. (Not all granite, for example, is available in both countertop and backsplash thicknesses.) If you're using contrasting materials, use materials of similar quality for greatest harmony.

Ceramic tile

Ceramic tile, not an ordinary material for complete kitchen walls, is very popular as a backsplash for countertops, stoves, and hoods. An endless variety of styles, colors, shapes, patterns, and textures is available. Ceramic tile (especially tile and other patterned tile) is synonymous with Old World charm and is occasionally seen covering the entire wall in a new Old World inspired kitchen. Of course nothing says Contemporary more emphatically than large-format Italian tile.



WARNING

Don't use heavily textured tiles directly behind a stove (where hard-to-remove grease may accumulate) or anywhere where dirt and dust accumulate. These labor-intensive materials demand tender loving care.

Glass tile

Glass tile (architectural glass tile, not to be confused with glass block), is the highest-priced material for backsplashes, where it's popularly used. It can and does cover entire walls. Glass tiles come in an infinite number of dazzling colors, patterns, and textures. A wide array of sizes and shapes range from mosaic to brick and large format.

TURNING ON FANTASTIC FAUCETS

Faucets come in a mind-boggling number of styles (ranging from Vintage to Contemporary), and finishes (brushed chrome, brass, ceramic, and combinations of these) to match or contrast with appliances. They're available in a wide range of prices that depend on quality of materials and workmanship. Although look is important, function is a priority. And you may need more than one kind of faucet for different purposes and places — above the stove, at a beverage center, and in the prep sink area. Consider how they look together, although they don't have to match.

Compare an expensive faucet with a less expensive one to see differences in finish. Some differences include smooth versus rough surfaces, solid brass versus plating, and multi-protective coatings (versus one or two) for platings. And ask about the inner workings, because some (although more expensive) are designed for greater efficiency and longer life.

Glass tile is manufactured in different ways so that some can be installed in wet areas (kitchens and baths) and some should not. Tile manufactured with color in the glass is for wet areas. Tile with color added to the back of clear glass is not recommended for wet areas because water will likely remove the backing.

Glass tile should be installed by professionals for two reasons:

- » It has a translucent quality that reveals mortar.
- » The right mortar must be paired with a particular type of tile (to prevent delamination of backings wherever the tile is installed).

Glass tile dazzles because it doesn't reflect but refracts light, making it a constant animated "light show" — the liveliest of wall surfaces. For more about glass tile, see our books *Glass Tile Inspirations for Kitchens and Baths* and *Designing & Living with Glass Tiles*, available on Amazon, <https://schifferbooks.com>, and www.tile-magazine.com.

Paint

Use a washable semigloss or high-gloss paint. Decorative paint techniques that add pattern, light texture, and depth are great, especially if you're just using paint alone. Don't hesitate to paint ceilings a contrasting color. High ceilings can show off rich, deep, strong colors without making a room seem claustrophobic. Use tints for lower ceilings. (To get the lowdown on painting techniques, go to Chapter 14.)

Paneling and plank

Wood is a very comforting surface and shows up in kitchens in various guises, including knotty pine, barnboard, beadboard, and paneling of all kinds. Choose the one that underscores your decorating theme or style and a finish that can be cleaned. If your kitchen has exposed wood beams or wood in the ceiling, be mindful of how the wood chosen for the wall relates to that in the ceiling in color and texture.

Wall covering

Wall coverings (vinyl, paper, and other materials) establish a decorating theme. The added color, pattern, and texture from wall coverings add interest to rooms where so many surfaces — cabinets, appliances, and ceiling — are plain solids. If you choose a wall covering (see Chapter 12 for how to estimate rollage), follow these guidelines:

- » Choose a pattern that hides fingerprints, especially if small children and messy adults are around.
- » Use a big pattern if you have large expanses of uninterrupted wall space.
- » If architectural features (such as doors or windows) or kitchen cabinets and appliances break up the space (and if you're papering the ceiling), stick to a small, all-over pattern that doesn't require much or any matching.
- » Use a bold, distinctive pattern in bright colors as room identifiers for young children and people with poor vision.



REMEMBER

Don't think that you have to stick to a typical kitchen pattern if those patterns are not your style. Check out bedroom, living room, dining room, and texture sections of wall-covering books.

Decorating Do's

After you've decided on your furnishings and backgrounds, waste no time in getting to the pleasant part of decorating!

Selecting a style or theme

After all the budgeting, measuring, plotting, and planning, the fun begins. Try to answer this question in 25 words or less: "What do I want my kitchen to look like?" Read on to find out how to get the look you want.

Determining your style

If you think you may prefer a particular style, rip photographs from decorating magazines, brochures, and kitchen style books (scan or copy if you don't want to destroy the book). Don't be surprised to discover that you've collected lots of different looks. Put them on your inspiration wall so you can compare the pictures. Are there any common denominators among the photos? Are they all white? Do they have lots of natural woods or use stainless-steel appliances? Do they have painted cabinets, loads of beautifully decorated windows, enchanting islands? Are they mostly Contemporary, Country, dressy, casual, or an eclectic mix?



TIP

Make a list of your likes (and dislikes) about photos. By mixing a little of one and a lot of another, you craft your own personal style.

Decorative themes are an easy way to go. You may have your own ideas. A room in a friend's new house honors a relative named Peacock, so naturally there are peacock motifs here, there, and everywhere. A leading designer's South Carolina house has an Audubon room — with bird motifs abounding.



TIP

For ideas, check paint store booklets and wall-covering books. Magazines such as *Coastal Living* (think beach), *Victoria* (think florals), *Country Living*, and others are devoted to a particular themed look. And Houzz (www.houzz.com) has 20 million interiors photos — some bound to inspire the perfect theme.

Letting cabinets be your guide

Cabinets are a kitchen's main feature, so new ones will establish your style and scheme (French, English, Country, Victorian, Euro-Modern, and so on).

Reusing existing cabinets will save a bundle of money and tons of time, if they're usable and can be restyled to suit your new direction. Will your old cabinets work? Ask yourself the following questions:

- » Are my cabinets sturdy and in good working condition?
- » Do they provide adequate storage?
- » Are the cabinets simple square boxes to which trim can be added, if needed?
- » Will new knobs add a new look?
- » Can outdated hardware be exchanged for a new style?
- » Will the right color paint or stain transform my cabinets?

If your answers to these questions are “yes,” cosmetic changes will save the day. See the sidebar “Giving your kitchen cabinets an extreme makeover” for ideas on how to give your old cabinets new pizzazz.

GIVING YOUR KITCHEN CABINETS AN EXTREME MAKEOVER

If your cabinets need a facelift, think of the following tips as Botox for old boxes.

- **Clean your cabinets.** A good cleaning may bring new luster to tired but handsome wood.
- **Change the hardware.** Try something zippy, like bent twig fork handles, hand-painted ceramic knobs, clear glass handles and knobs, or metal pharmacy pulls. For unity, match cabinet hardware and faucet finishes (all brass, copper, steel, iron, or so on).
- **Paint them.** A little paint (or stain) goes a long way. Are you going Contemporary? Paint simple cabinets with a high-gloss lacquer-look finish in a zingy new color. For example, paint base cabinets one color and wall-hung cabinets another. Antiqued cabinets in off-white, buttery yellow, mellow rose, watermelon red, and apple green add Old World charm. Paint cabinets high-gloss white for an instant Country look. Or stain them a natural, wood color in the Victorian style.
- **Add beadboard as a backsplash and paint it a crisp white.** Paint your cabinets' outsides white and the insides a nautical blue (or vice versa) for a seaside effect.
- **Relaminate all cabinets in one solid color.** Or, for a more Contemporary or Eclectic look, mix and match colors and interesting patterns. For example, keep the cabinet boxes plain and add different colored or patterned doors (or vice versa).
- **Exchange old doors on plain cabinets.** Try new fancy doors in the style of your choice.
- **Add classic architectural trims to plain cases.** You can include fluted pilasters at the corners, pediments and crown moldings on top, or deep base moldings at the bottom.

Creating the background

Cabinets star against a background chosen to show them off. The key is contrast. For fancy cabinets, backgrounds (walls, floors, and ceilings) should be plainer. Choose a simple paint, paneling, or a small-patterned wall covering for walls. Paint the ceiling in a light color that coordinates with the cabinets. Flooring should be darker value than the walls but shouldn't be too colorful or patterned.

If you want cabinets to recede into a unified background, reduce the contrast. Keep cabinets and wall, floor, and ceiling treatments related. The less contrast you use, the quieter and more serene your room. A calm background paves the way for something else to become the focal point.



REMEMBER

Don't overlook your kitchen's ceiling. Most ceilings get short shrift in decorating. Kitchens are great places for beams, coffers, beautiful paint colors, wall coverings, stenciling, and trellises. The larger the kitchen, the more obvious the ceiling and the more it demands that some visual interest be added. (For great tips on stunning ceiling treatments, see Chapter 14.)

Spotlighting a hood

In kitchens today, the hood often is the design *prima donna*. Hanging on carved *corbels* (supporting brackets) above a fully integrated backsplash and stove, the hood is a dramatic focal point. Consider creating your own focal point in any number of styles. Find inspiration in magazines and online, as well as in kitchen showrooms. (If you don't want a conspicuous hood, blend it with adjoining cabinetry.)



TIP

Underneath this show horse is a workhorse: the ducted ventilation fan. Make sure you have the right number of cubic feet of air moved per second (CFMs) to clear your kitchen of cooking odors. While you contemplate spending a thousand or more dollars for a large, truly decorative hood, add in the cost of the fan.

Furnishing a great kitchen

Kitchens are getting bigger, breaking down walls between living areas (dens, family rooms, and even living rooms), hallways, laundry areas, butler's pantries, breakfast rooms, and more. These *great kitchens* include full-blown seating areas (living rooms without walls), including a sofa and lounge and accent chairs. (Choose quiet appliances for these great open spaces.)

If your kitchen incorporates a seating area, decide whether you want your furniture fabrics to play a starring role or second fiddle to an exotic floor or wall pattern. If upholstery's the star, patterns can be as big and bold as suitable scale allows. If your upholstery plays second fiddle, choose a pattern that's on the small side (such as a small woven check, plaid, or stripe). Coordinate seating-area fabrics with fabrics on kitchen chairs. Make fabric chair pads or cushions in coordinating patterns, colors, and textures.



TIP

Choose easily cleaned upholstery and other fabrics. Consider using washable slipcovers over any upholstery.

If your decorating style is Eclectic, don't hesitate to pit antique-style chairs against a Contemporary table or vice versa. This sort of visual opposition can be fun.

Treating windows

Usually, the kitchen needs all the light it can get. The kitchen is one place where a handsome window with no treatment at all is most desirable. In most cases, less is better — unless your style (or need for privacy) calls for draperies in the upholstered seating area. Thick-slat blinds, wooden shutters, matchstick, and old-fashioned window blinds are great simple solutions to providing light control and privacy.

But dozens of alternative-style draperies, curtains, swags, and *jabots* (arrangements of looped material) are available (see Chapter 15). Because not all windows in your kitchen and great room will be the same, be open to different window treatments (drapery on one window, swag on a short window, for example). Ideally, they'll share something in common, perhaps color or pattern.

Accessorizing to add eye appeal

Larger kitchens make room for china cabinets and bookshelves — great for displaying favorite collections (plates, pitchers, candlesticks, and so on) and in the seating area for family snapshots. Arrange your collectibles with care; the better the items relate to one another and to the space, the more attractive they'll look — a joy to behold.



TIP

Paint the wall behind an open shelf a snappy color to show off displayed items better.

Almost anything used in the kitchen can double as an accessory, especially when you've got a collection of items, such as wooden bowls, spoons, or rolling pins; interesting pottery or porcelain; colorful trays; woven baskets, old painted tins; cookie cutters; copper pots; and *tole ware* (decoratively painted tin objects). Just arrange them artfully for the world to see. (To light up your kitchen like a pro, see Chapter 16.)



REMEMBER

Two accessories you can't forget are those that aid in fire prevention. Keep a fire extinguisher near the cooktop (under the sink or mounted on the wall) and mount a smoke alarm on the ceiling just outside the kitchen.

- » Setting your budget
- » Thinking about future buyers
- » Reviewing your decorating options
- » Making bathrooms work for the people who use them
- » Finding quick-fix ideas for common decorating problems

Chapter 18

Beautifying Bathrooms

Bathrooms are bigger and more beautiful than ever. They've gone beyond the basics to include expanded dressing areas, handy laundry facilities, exercise space, and more. The most recent trend is toward *bath as spa* — an almost sacred place for enjoying the recuperative powers of water.

In this chapter, you find out about tried-and-true decorating secrets that can transform a plainly pragmatic place into a beautiful, highly functional bathroom. We give you ideas for adding zest to the primary areas of walls, floors, and ceilings, and give great tips on accessorizing. Finally, figure out how to decorate primary baths, small bath, guest baths, and children's baths.

Bathroom Budgeting

Establishing a workable budget is the first step for your bath beautiful project. If you're redecorating more than one bath — most homes have at least two — you need to make every cent work for you. By redoing more than one bath at the same time, you can save time and money — beginning with the plumbing and wiring savings involved in relocating fixtures and lighting.



TIP

Before you spend a dollar, get information. The best source is the National Kitchen and Bath Association (NKBA; go to <https://nkba.org> or call 800-843-6522). Most home centers have NKBA-certified designers on staff.

A major overhaul of your bathroom could cost thousands of dollars, but simple redecorating can run as low as the cost of a gallon of paint. A dated-looking bathroom can get a quick and easy spruce-up with new showerheads, faucets, and hardware for less than \$100. Re-laminating countertops and cabinets saves a bundle. New shower curtains, towels, rugs, and window treatments can cost as little as \$50 to \$100. A gallon of paint (\$12–20), a new border (less than \$5), and fancier (but not high-priced) light fixtures are all relatively inexpensive style makers.



TIP

Consider these budget-stretching ideas:

- » **Accept others' rejects.** Shop showrooms for custom-order items that a client refused.
- » **Choose classic white fixtures.** They never go out of style — and they're less expensive than colored ones.
- » **Consider solid surfaces that look like stone.** Less costly than real marble or granite, solid-surface countertops are easy to clean and never go out of style.
- » **Create a timeless background with white or neutrals.** Jazz them up with a few decorative tiles in exotic colors and patterns.
- » **Forgo real stone, and use a vinyl look-alike.** Vinyl looks great for less, is easy on the feet, and is simple to maintain.
- » **Think big.** Use large ceramic tiles for walls and floors. They look good and cost less to install than smaller tiles.
- » **Use chrome faucets, fittings, and accessories.** They look classy but cost less — and, in wet climates, hold up better — than brass.

MEASURING YOUR FACILITY

To estimate how much paint to buy or how much space you have for extras, you need to measure and make a floor plan. For details, see Chapter 3.

Measuring a bathroom for fixtures requires special considerations. You need at least a foot and a half in front of your toilet for leg space. Remember to allow at least the door width's area for opening and closing — you'll need extra space on the pull side. For other bath design guidelines, go to <https://nkba.org>.

Strategizing for Resale

Thinking of selling your place within two years or less? Shift into neutrals — white, almond, and other classics that prospective buyers prefer. If you don't know what's hot and what's not in bathrooms, ask a local real estate agent.

Incorporate these simple tips as you redecorate:

- » Add glass handles, classic silver or pewter pulls, or hand-painted ceramic knobs to your cabinets.
- » Find sink and faucet designs that suit your home's style — people notice them first. (To determine if your home is Traditional or Contemporary, see Chapters 8 and 9.) Also, stick with the same metals and finishes throughout.
- » Look for a new tub faucet to match the new sink faucet, give the shower a new glass door, and replace floor tiles.
- » Give your bathroom an instant facelift with a coat of light (white or some pale antique color) paint.
- » Select durable cabinetry. Cabinets are often part of the background — they should be nice, but they don't have to be total knockouts. Keep cabinets light for small spaces.



REMEMBER

Your decorating goal is to create an attractive and functional bath that any buyer could love. Neutral colors, paint, and simple fixtures fill the bill. Avoid wallpaper — the pattern may not suit everyone. Keeping it simple is the best policy. Look for:

- » A few important, not-too-busy, functional accessories such as towel bars, a paper holder, and a soap dish
- » Classically colored (white, beige, cream) ceramic tile for the floor and walls (a *must* for a quality tub/shower area)
- » Decorative but not-too-fussy lighting fixtures
- » Decorative narrow, open shelves to display perfume bottles and pretty items that take up space in cabinets
- » Good lighting near the vanity mirror
- » Large three-way mirrored medicine cabinets (for seeing your hair from the back)
- » Light-penetrating — but privacy-guarding — window treatments (stained, frosted, etched, or opaque glass)
- » Storage space for necessities — especially important with a pedestal sink — such as a small cabinet with a door

Customizing Your Bathroom

Planning on sticking around for a long time? Then customize your bathroom to meet your needs. Customization isn't so much a matter of money as of thoughtfulness and the desire to have it *your* way. The truly personal bathroom works the way you need it to work.

Gathering information

Take stock of your and your family's needs and wishes. Think function first, then style. For example, are you or your family members short, tall, or physically challenged? If so, you need to consider your vanity's height and ease of usage. For more on *universal design* (designs that meet the needs of the physically and mentally challenged), go to <https://nkba.org>.

Make a list of physical comforts you're looking for (including height of the lavatory, toilet, tub, showerheads, and so on), and then consider purely decorative desires (colors, textures, style of cabinetry, and so forth). With this information gathered, you're ready to proceed.

Sprucing up surfaces

Ceilings, floors, walls, and windows join forces to create the perfect background for your cabinets, faucets, fixtures, and accessories. Your bathroom's heat, humidity, and sanitation facilities call for specialized walls, floors, ceilings, and windows. Keep in mind the considerations discussed in the following sections.

Walls

Choose easy-to-clean, moisture-resistant surface materials, such as ceramic tile and vinyl, for walls in and near tubs and showers. Of the two, the more expensive ceramic tile is more durable. In Traditional rooms, extend the tile around the remaining walls to at least chair-rail height (about 30 inches).

In Contemporary baths, especially in smaller city apartments, tiling all walls, the ceiling, and the floor with ceramic or stone tiles is fairly standard. Depend on other furnishings — towels, artwork, and accessories — to add interesting color, pattern, and texture.



TIP

Give your bathroom a big bang for the buck by finding decorative tiles to intersperse with the plain vanilla ones. You can also create themes by cutting tiles and creating star patterns, for example.

Stone surfaces, including marble and granite, are more expensive than ceramic tile, but many designers choose them because they look beautiful, are easy to maintain, and last forever. New luxury stones include onyx, a translucent natural stone.

Don't rule out wall coverings for bathroom walls (see Figure 18-1). Be sure to install washable vinyl or vinyl-coated wall coverings that stand up to moisture. For unity's sake, choose a background color that blends with other wall surfaces and those in nearby rooms.



FIGURE 18-1:
Wallpaper makes
a bathroom
cozier.

*Photograph courtesy of John Lyle (www.johnlyledesign.com);
photograph by Mark Roskams*

Strong motifs in a wall covering can establish a distinct theme. Figure 18-1 shows how to create unique, purely personal style using wall coverings.



TIP

Make sure that your bathroom has ample ventilation to prevent moisture damage. Install a combination heat lamp and ducted fan. Use the heat lamp to dry out excess moisture and prevent mold, mildew, and peeling wall covering.

Floors

Bathroom floors must stand up to continual wear, water, and cleaning. (For info on flooring, see Chapter 13.) Best choices include stone, tile, and vinyl.

Natural stone is an upscale choice. Add an Oriental rug for some texture and softness. (Get the look for less by using laminate.)

Ceramic tile looks and performs well, and that's what makes it so popular. Tile sizes range from 1 inch to 24 inches. Using large tiles and fewer grout lines makes typical 5-x-9-foot bathrooms look larger, especially if the tile is set on the diagonal. Use light-colored large tile with matching grouting.

Vinyl floor covering costs less than ceramic tile and is also softer — dropped jars are less likely to break, and it's gentle on legs and feet. But it won't last as long.

We don't generally recommend wood flooring for the bathroom. However, engineered hardwoods and hardwoods covered in protective polyurethane can stand up to the wear and tear. Just don't let water stand for too long.



TIP

A simple solution to a really ugly floor is washable, wall-to-wall bathroom carpeting that you can cut with shears (to fit around fixtures) and lay in place. Secure the carpeting with double-faced tape. You can pull it up and toss it in the washing machine whenever you like. Relatively inexpensive, it comes in 5-x-9-foot bundles and is sold in bed and bath shops.

You can add extra color and pattern with washable throw rugs with nonskid backing. Inexpensive machine-made area rugs that look like Orientals may also be a good bet.

Ceilings

Bathroom ceilings are usually white to reflect the most light. But white can be boring and too visible. (For a bevy of ceiling spruce-ups, check out Chapter 15.) Here are some tried-and-true tips for decorating this surface:

- » In a large bathroom with a high ceiling, use a strongly contrasting color or pattern to create interest and intimacy.
- » In small bathrooms and low-ceilinged large bathrooms, keep contrast to a low level.
- » In a wall-covered small powder room (where moisture isn't a problem), treat the ceiling to either the same or a coordinating wall covering. (If you're using a directional patterned wall covering, use a small-scaled coordinate on the ceiling.)



TIP

- » Your bathroom's ceiling can be wood plank (especially if it's in a mountain cabin). Just make sure the wood is properly treated to withstand moisture and that your room is adequately ventilated.



TIP

If you like the look of Victorian pressed tin ceilings, you can get it at a fraction of the price by using anaglyptic-style vinyl wall covering. Find it at home improvement stores. (We found ours on sale!) After hanging it, spray-paint it with a metallic gold or silver for a rich look that costs almost nothing.

Windows

Most people want the bathroom to allow daylight to stream through, but we also want privacy. Here are some tips on how you can accomplish both:

- » Consider installing frosted glass windows, which allow light to filter through while also providing some privacy.
- » Install blinds that roll from the bottom up to allow the sunlight in and still provide some privacy.
- » Install roll shades on windows. If you like the look of undecorated, no-nonsense windows, roll up these shades out of sight when not needed.
- » Other types of blinds are also available if you want semi-privacy. For example, matchstick bamboo shades come lined for privacy or unlined for semi-privacy.

Light cotton curtains work well in most bathrooms where a light and airy mood is desired. For more information on window coverings, skip back to Chapter 15.

Accessorizing Your Bathroom

Accessorizing is the fun part of decorating. Consider the following tips:

- » **Add a fireplace mantel to your dressed up, formal-looking bath (with space enough for a comfy chair).** Electric logs are okay to use in a well-ventilated space with due caution. But working or not, the effect of a fireplace in this haven is out of this world!
- » **Build your color scheme around a decorative sink with mosaic detailing and a matching mirror.** It makes a major statement.



WARNING

- » **Consider live plants as accessories.** Make sure to place them out of harm's way (where they can't fall into the tub or cause someone to stumble). If you use fake plants, pretend they're real: Place them near a window.
- » **Don't try to match your towels and shower curtain to your walls.** Paint stores can custom-match paint to your towels. You can also buy white towels and a white shower curtain and monogram them in a matching beige thread.
- » **Keep accessories related but not repetitious.** If you want a personalized bathroom, avoid ensembles that came straight from a bed/bath shop. Instead, take some time to select or make your own grouping of things that especially appeal to you.
- » **Match, don't mix, metals.** If the faucets are brass, keep towel bars and rings, curtain rods, and other metal surfaces brass as well. If the faucets in your home mix metals — brass trim with chrome faucets, for example — match all other metals to the faucet body, not its trim.
- » **Protect pictures on the wall by keeping them away from splashing water.** The bath isn't the place for watercolors and fine art — the humidity destroys them. Think posters and acrylic paintings. Keep gilded picture frames away from direct water sources, which damage the finish. (We discovered this the hard way!)

Meeting a Bathroom's Needs

Certain bathrooms require special decorating tactics. Primary bathrooms, small bathrooms, guest bathrooms, and children's bathrooms have different needs. The following sections can get you on the right track.

Styling your bathroom

For convenience and efficiency during the morning rush hour, consider functional and decorative touches. Two of (almost) everything comes in handy when two share a bathroom, for example. And don't forget luxury touches. Even a tight budget can allow for a few luxuries to enhance the bath's ritual. Consider these tips for creating magic in your primary bath:



TIP

- » Add a standing screen (made by hinging louvered shutters together) to create privacy for the toilet, if you have enough room.
- » Create comfort with furnishings for the bath: a terry-covered chaise lounge for him, a comfy chair for her. They're useful for relaxing after a bath or



TIP

blow-drying your hair. Inexpensive white plastic chairs covered in white terrycloth make a handy spot for a stack of folded towels, too.

- » Customize cabinets with compartments for drawers and pullout shelves for optimal storage and greater convenience for each partner.
- » Design a glass-enclosed bath/shower with glass etching — perhaps your initials to match your monogrammed towels and terrycloth robe.
- » For visual comfort, include a TV (either wall-mounted or concealed in a cabinet on a pullout shelf). Store the unit in a special holder that sticks to the tub or wall to keep it out of the water.
- » If you have the room, expand the uses of your primary bath by creating a mini-gym area with exercise equipment.
- » Incorporate a heated towel rack that serves up several warm towels on cold days and adds heat to a chilly bathroom.
- » Two lavatories (perhaps at custom heights) or, better yet, two vanities add convenience to a shared bathroom. Mount adjustable magnifying mirrors for each.
- » Let the light in with skylights, windows, or glass block walls that illuminate the lavatory area(s).
- » What's luxury without soothing sounds? Add a compact audio system so you can listen to your favorite music as you soak in the tub.
- » Include pretty washable area rugs for color, pattern, and warmth for cool feet. Treat yourself and your room to several in different patterns — and change them when your mood changes.
- » And don't forget the little things — scented candles, potpourri, fresh flowers from your own garden, sachet packets for drawers, and a display of pretty bottles (perhaps with different fragrances).

Making the most of small bathrooms

Want to make your small bathroom seem larger? First, combine smart layouts and small-scale fixtures. Next, consider these suggestions:

- » Add mirrors. They're great space (and light) expanders when used on opposite walls and even on all four walls.
- » Cover a window in sparkling, colorful glass mosaic for a continuous light show.

- » Increase storage by building recessed shelves between wall studs, so shelves don't intrude into the space.
- » Keep accessories to a minimum to avoid clutter and confusion.
- » Keep window treatments simple, and blend blind and fabric colors with the walls' background color.
- » Make a bathroom appear larger and lighter by using panels of space-expanding transparent glass between fixtures.
- » Replace a hinged door with a *pocket door* (one that slides back into the wall), which requires no swing space.
- » Store only the essentials in a tiny bathroom. Keep refills and replacements handy in an adjoining room or hallway closet.
- » Use glass tub or shower doors.

Gussy up guest bathrooms

Consider these points to make your guest bathroom a great one:

- » Keep bath and bedroom color schemes strongly related to create continuity. Consider a positive/negative color scheme (see Chapter 5): Use dark walls and light accent colors in one space, light walls and dark accents in the other.
- » Store paper, linens, a new toothbrush, and other necessary supplies inside the bathroom, for easy access.
- » Use a glass or light-colored shelf over the toilet if the bathroom is small. Don't make the shelf wider than the top of the tank.



TIP

If you don't have room for a wall-hung shelf, you can store rolled towels in a wicker basket, and perhaps add in some bathing sponges and shower gels. Provide a magazine rack, pretty soaps, and maybe even an audio system or TV.

Styling your children's bathroom



TIP

When you think of children's bathrooms, primary colors, clown motifs, and other tried-and-true themes may come to mind. If that's what your child likes, that's fine, but ask before you decorate.

In a child's bathroom, safety takes center stage. Following are some suggestions that spring from real-life experiences:



TIP

- » Avert scalding by installing hot stop valves that prevent a child from turning water on to the highest, hottest temperature.
- » Avoid using slippery area rugs, make sure the tub and floors are skid-proofed, and consider adding child-height grab bars.
- » Check that the glass for the shower or tub doors is tempered so it doesn't shatter. Make sure it's properly installed.
- » Include rocker-type light switches low enough for a child to reach.
- » Install easy-to-manuever lever faucet handles. Mount them on one side of the sink, near the front edge of the counter, so a child can reach them without having to climb on top of the vanity.
- » Keep a nightlight on at all times.
- » Lock medicine and cleaning supply cabinet doors.
- » Make sure the shower door opens out so no child (or adult) can become wedged in. (Make sure doors can swing freely.)
- » Place lever handles on all doors at a child's height.
- » Prevent children from locking themselves in the bathroom; make sure you can unlock the exterior door from the outside.
- » Provide a stool that doesn't tip over for small children to use at the sink.
- » Remove electrically powered radios, hairdryers, and any other small appliances that could be dropped into the tub or sink. Substitute battery-operated products if desired or necessary.
- » Round corners on countertops to prevent injury to tots whose heads may be near the same height.
- » Screw freestanding storage cabinets to the wall so they don't tip.
- » Verify that your ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) works. It shuts off electrical current when an appliance comes in contact with water.

When it comes to decorating, if you're thinking of resale any time in the near future, take a moment before adding, applying, or installing anything that will cost time, effort, and dollars. Consider some temporary ways to bring special colors into your child's bath — with accessories.

Colorful accents and fun motifs in towels, bath mats, framed art, soaps, the shower curtain, and so on add fun. Perhaps use some of the new peel-and-stick ceramic tiles to create a border on the sink wall or cabinets. Peel-and-stick wall-covering borders add interest, too, and they're easy to remove when you're ready to move.

Transforming Tacky into Terrific

Using your imagination and elbow grease to transform an ugly bath into a beautiful one saves money — and it's fun. Consider suggestions in the following sections for sprucing up bathrooms in older houses.

Spicing up your vanity



TIP

Bathroom vanity cabinets (the cabinets that hold bathroom sinks or lavatories) are sometimes less than beautiful, even when they're brand-new. Age certainly doesn't improve them. Before you give yours the old heave-ho, consider these possibilities:

- » **Add pizzazz.** Create an Old World look by outlining cabinet doors with a row of decorative brass upholsterer's nail heads. They're available from an upholsterer, home center, hardware store, or craft shop. (Before you nail, remove the door and place it on a firm surface.)
- » **Antique a carved and fancy cabinet.** Use a paint kit to highlight raised carvings, fancy moldings, and trims.
- » **Change the hardware.** Upgrading the hardware to new brass or ceramic handles and knobs may be all that you need.
- » **Cover a simple vanity base with wall covering.** Use the same pattern that's on the walls to blend in the old eyesore.
- » **Paint it.** Pick a great color and the right paint and painting techniques.
- » **Relaminate.** Countertop specialty shops can relaminate any cabinet. Look for those who can relaminate on-site so you don't have to unplumb your sink (a costly deal).
- » **Stencil on a motif.** Paint hearts and flowers, geometrics, or whatever. You don't have anything to lose but a little time and a dab of paint.



TIP

Making the best of old tile

Tile is expensive to replace. If you've inherited an unappealing color scheme, don't despair. We have the following remedies for you:

- » **Apply wall covering above the tile.** Search for a pattern that incorporates several colors, including that of the old tiles.
- » **Dress up ceramic tile with stick-on accents.** They come in plenty of themes, styles, and colors, and are easy to apply.
- » **Faux paint.** Paint the wall above the tile, using layers of color that relate to the old tile.
- » **Throw down an area rug.** Rugs are great for covering offending flooring. Choose one that picks up and plays back the colors in your wall treatments.

Not sure what colors to use? Look to wall coverings, fabrics, and even gift-wrap for inspiration.

- » Creating a floor plan that works
- » Shedding light on your subjects
- » Buying office equipment
- » Getting online
- » Selecting equipment and furniture
- » Choosing the right colors and accessories

Chapter **19**

Setting Up Work from Home

More people are working remotely than ever before due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Whether the space is for work or study, people are redesigning their lives and homes to fuel their passions. Your work-from-home solution needs professional-level equipment, state-of-the-art technology, and space.

In this chapter, we walk you through how to find the right space for your home office, add lighting, bring in office equipment, get connected to the Internet, choose office equipment and furniture, and pick colors and accessories to boost productivity.

Locating Your Home Office

Location, location, location — it's just as important for a home office as it is for real estate. The ideal location provides easy access, privacy, and enough space for equipment, furnishings, storage, and comfort. These factors all affect productivity.

Pick the best location the first time around, because relocating your workspace can be a serious (and somewhat expensive) business. Finding a great location means answering some key questions:

- » **Who will use your home office?** A converted garage makes a great space, and it's a short commute! However, if other family members use your computer or equipment, you may want your office in the house. If you need to keep an eye on small children while you work, claim a room that's near them, perhaps installing French doors to control sound but allow views. In some cases, you may need to set up an office in a bedroom — for example, if your child needs a study space of their own.
- » **What kind of work will you do in your office?** What you do affects what you need. Researchers, students, and writers need bookshelves and tabletop space for spacing out their research materials. Accountants and consultants need filing cabinets for storing records. List your requirements, plus any special equipment you need, in order to figure out necessary floor and wall space.
- » **Will you see clients or colleagues in your home office?** Having clients or colleagues walk through private living areas is awkward — it's more comfortable (and professional) to have a separate entry. You also need an adequately large conference area with a table and seating.
- » **What kind of environment do you prefer working in?** Do you need privacy and total silence? Or do you like flux and flow and background noise? Find a location for your home office that comes as close to your perfect environment as possible.



TIP

When your home office is a separate room, you can close the door during working hours and keep outside distractions at a distance. For a particularly small office, substitute a glass French door that shuts out sound but makes the room seem larger. We did this for a client in a Chicago high-rise so she could see the rest of her apartment. Take advantage of small spaces to sneak in a writing desk (see Figure 19-1).

If you prefer being in the fray, or you don't have a separate room for an office, a computer armoire or work center is a great solution. When you finish working, simply close the doors, and the office disappears.



FIGURE 19-1:
Take advantage
of space with a
writing desk.

Photograph courtesy of Dino Tonn (www.dinotonnphotography.com)

Measuring Your Space

The first step in designing your home office is drawing your room's floor plan (see Chapter 3). Measure each piece of furniture and equipment (including your computer, printer, fax machine, desk, and chair) so you can experiment with different layouts. Note on your floor plan the location of windows, doors, and electrical outlets. Imagine yourself walking through a typical workday — reaching for one item, filing another — until you find the plan that best suits you.



TIP

If you have a beautiful view from the windows in your home office, don't block the view with furniture. Instead, build cabinets, shelves, or window-seat storage below and around the windows.

Lighting Up

Offices need three kinds of lighting: general, task, and accent. (For the lowdown on lighting, see Chapter 16.) Take a critical look at a room's natural light sources. Does the room have plenty of windows? If not, can you add them before you set up shop?



WARNING

Natural light needs balancing with artificial lighting, even in the daytime. Shadowy areas need lighting, and not every day is sunny. Use blinds to control sunlight. (For tips on window treatments, see Chapter 15.) Place computers and other equipment at right angles to the sunlight to prevent glare. Don't position your computer in front of a window — constantly adjusting your eyes to two different light sources causes eyestrain.

Make sure that task lights for reading and working are adjustable so you can change the angles and heights when you need to. Check out halogen lights, which produce as much light as an incandescent bulb ten times larger in size. Consider the new long-life fluorescent task lights that use at least 60 percent less energy than a standard bulb and last ten times longer.



REMEMBER

Before settling on lighting, check with a certified lighting consultant at your lighting or home improvement store. Be prepared to install a variety of light sources, including general and task lights.

Equipping Your Office

Your work and how you do it influences the kind, quantity, and arrangement of your home office equipment and furniture. The following sections deal with your special needs for high-performance equipment and furniture.

Electronic equipment

Computers are the focal point of most home offices. Buy the best computer you can afford. Consider a laptop (which goes where you go) and desktop conversion extras (like a big monitor, keyboard, and mouse) if you travel. If children and other family members plan to use your computer, look into adding workstations (which keep your own desk area off-limits). Most computer makers and retailers have great deals — be sure to comparison-shop before plunking down your dough. If you plan to use more than one computer, plan for extra outlets and desk room.



TIP

Staying connected is essential. Invest in the highest-quality communication equipment and Internet technology.

Furniture

Forget about using a quaint kitchen table and a straight-back chair as your office furniture. You won't find carpal tunnel syndrome, a stiff neck, or other discomforts very quaint when they keep you from doing your job. Ergonomically designed

work surfaces and chairs, which support your body, are available in many affordable price ranges and are scaled for children and adults.

Ready-to-assemble (RTA) furniture available from office supply stores offers real savings. Many different styles and materials are in stock and ready to roll out of the store and into your office. Furniture stores show only a relatively few styles of higher-priced finished furniture, but they have catalogs galore for special orders. Keep in mind that custom ordering from a store catalog may require weeks (or months!) for deliveries.

Desks

A desk is usually the most important piece of furniture in a home office, so spend some time looking at the options and finding the one that's right for you. To determine how big a desk you need, choose a position for your computer (dead center, on the right, or on the left of the desk). Then figure in enough extra work surface to accommodate the different jobs you do. (See Figure 19-2 for creating a serene library/office space.)



FIGURE 19-2:
This serene
rooms combines
office with library
and media room.

Photograph courtesy of Mark Candelaria, AIA (www.candelariadesign.com); photograph by Dino Tonn



TIP

Any desk should be at least 24 inches deep. The standard height of desks is 29 inches. A computer keyboard should be 24½ to 28 inches off the floor. (You can install an adjustable, retractable keyboard tray under the work surface if you want to leave your desk space free.)

L-shaped and U-shaped desks provide a wraparound work surface that's easy to use. A P-shaped desk (which is a variation of the L-shaped desk) flares out into a wider semicircle at one end, allowing for comfortable desktop conferencing. Work surfaces of between 32 and 36 inches wide, flaring to 42- to 48-inch-wide conference table ends, are very popular. Either end of the desk can be attached to a matching, standard 6-foot-long wall unit comprising a desk with a file-drawer pedestal and optional bookcase hutch. These units are available in all price ranges and come in a wide variety of materials, including fancy wood veneers and easily cleaned laminates.



TIP

Allow a 5-foot-square floor space for a P-shaped, U-shaped, or L-shaped desk. Add another 2 feet to each side of the square if you augment these work surfaces with a freestanding credenza.



REMEMBER

Whenever you draw a desk on your floor plan, add a minimum of 2 feet for your office chair, plus another 2 feet in which to push back your chair when you stand up.

Custom-built and built-in furniture is generally more expensive, but it often makes the most efficient use of space. If space is tight, try building an adequate desktop that's less than the standard 32 inches wide. Or you can even build a desk with a space-saving *breakfront shape* (which is wider in the middle and narrower on the sides) or *banjo shape* (wide on one side and much narrower on the other). Some rooms have such odd-shaped nooks and crannies that custom furniture is the only way to make use of the space efficiently. So, although custom costs, consider the possibilities.



TIP

You may need a second desk in a different location, just for your own use. If you spend a lot of time conceptualizing, treat this desk and yourself to a view.

Chairs

Forget using a straight-backed chair — they're killers. Do your back, bottom, and mental health a favor. Your best bet is an upholstered swivel chair with five legs for stability and casters for mobility. Choose an adjustable model — one that you can raise and lower, tilt forward and backward. Be sure that the seat is well padded and firm for comfortable support — some of us stay in our chairs for days at a time!

Upholstery fabric should be leather (which is cool in the summer and warm in the winter), a high-quality vinyl, a tightly woven fabric, or see-through mesh that takes up no visual space. The fabric should be easy to clean (especially if you drink

coffee and snack at your desk like the rest of us do). Your chair should have open, not confining, adjustable armrests. And before you buy it, try it!

The kinds of guest chairs you need depends upon the number of visitors you have and whether they'll be examining papers (which requires a table) or just chatting while they're in your office. You want to impress a visiting client, but if you don't see many clients at home, your standards may be lower. Guest chairs can be anything you like, as long as they're comfortable and meet your quality code. Wing chairs (add an ottoman if you're going to read) and rocking chairs provide comfortable seating. Place guest chairs beside your desk and at small tables.

Storage

Don't forget bookshelves (freestanding or wall-hung), filing cabinets (four- or two-drawer, or some of each), and other storage areas. But if you can't find space for storage in the room, consider taking over a nearby hall closet. You can put filing cabinets in the closet and add shelving above them. You can create shelving in many ways; armoires, baker's racks, gym lockers, and many other pieces can double as storage units.



WARNING

Not all RTA bookshelves are quick and easy! We had to pay a carpenter to assemble one set of particularly complicated shelves, and that ended up doubling their cost. Ask to see assembly directions before you buy.



TIP

Save decorating dollars by painting inexpensive white laminate bookshelves a richer, more dramatic color. To paint a bookshelf, follow these easy steps:

- 1. Cover the bookshelf with primer and let it dry.**
- 2. Lightly sand the bookshelf and gently wipe away excess debris.**
- 3. Coat the shelf again with primer and let it dry.**
- 4. Cover the bookshelf with two coats of an oil-based, semigloss, enamel paint, sanding it well between each coat of paint.**

Use a sponge brush, which leaves no brush strokes. Add Penetrol (which improves your paint and is available at your local supply store) to the paint to make a smoother surface. (You can substitute latex enamel paint for the oil-based paint if you want, but the oil-based version makes the laminate look more like real wood.)



TIP

Let the paint cure for ten days before you stack anything on your bookshelves.

Wiring Up

Do you have enough outlets? Some older homes have poorly placed and too few outlets. Building codes require newer homes to have a certain number of outlets per foot, but even then, you may need more. Also check your wiring's type and condition, especially if you own an older home. Some wiring can't handle the load of all the equipment you need. Other homes don't have adequate electricity running into the house. (Double-check with your electric company.)

Experts recommend 20-amp dedicated circuits for computers, printers, and fax machines. If your space needs a portable air conditioner, it needs its own circuit. If your home was built prior to the 1990s, you may want to call in an electrician to determine your needs. Nothing is more frustrating than having your work disrupted by a total blackout. You should safely be able to run your microwave oven in the kitchen at the same time you're running your computer in your office — without a power crash.



TIP

Keep the following tips regarding electricity in mind as you create your office plan:

- » Add wall-hung, strip outlets above the height (and within reach) of your desk. These outlets are easily accessible for your computer, printer, and other equipment.
- » Upgrade telephone wiring from the normal CAT 3 wire to faster CAT 4 or 5, especially if you plan on using the Internet. (Check with your phone company for details.)
- » Use surge-protector extension cords to protect all your electrical equipment.

Color Scheming for Productivity

Color your office productive. Put color's power — its ability to profoundly affect mood — to work. We're not saying that you can't have fun with color in your office; we're saying that even fun colors should receive due deliberation. Don't just pick out a pretty color. Pick out a color that's going to earn its keep — or at least enable you to earn yours.

Do you need a jumpstart in the morning? A sunny yellow or a tone of orange does the trick. (You probably don't want a drop-dead red, which would be overkill.) Perhaps you enter your office with your mind going at least a mile a minute, and you don't stop all day. A soft blue can slow you down a wee bit.

Are you having trouble concentrating, thanks to ringing phones, beeping printers, and flashing computers? Perhaps a reflective pale green can help. The idea is to look before you leap for a particular paint. But after figuring out all there is to know about color (see Chapter 5), doing due diligence, and duly deliberating, you'll have to be the judge.

Start color scheming by selecting your furniture. Let it be your guide, because furniture largely determines your room's style. If you're having trouble deciding whether your office furniture should be dark or light, take into consideration the following guidelines:

- » Dark furniture (such as cherry, fruitwood, or mahogany) appears Traditional and more formal and serious than light furniture.
- » Light woods (such as birch, maple, or oak) look Contemporary and more casual and lighthearted than dark finishes.
- » Light laminates (such as white, beige, or gray) work well in Contemporary styles.

Furniture color and style influence your choice of a color scheme for your office, so before you make a final decision regarding furniture color, think about the colors you're considering for walls.



REMEMBER

Light cool colors recede (great for small spaces), and dark cool or warm colors advance, eating up space (not good for small spaces but just fine for large ones). Strong contrasts make spaces seem smaller, too.

Keep in mind the following guidelines:

- » To make a room appear smaller, heighten contrast by using dark furniture in a light-colored room or light furniture in a dark-colored room.
- » To make a room appear larger, reduce contrast. Use light furniture in a light-colored room or dark furniture in a dark-colored room.

Accessorizing for Productivity and Fun

When you work from home, you can decorate your office the way *you* want, keeping the degree of professionalism or non-professionalism where you want it. (You won't have to worry about corporate taste police!) Start by making the most of

attractive desk accessories in a style compatible with your furniture. Then take a look at the following ideas to get your creativity going:

- » Add a big blackboard or dry-erase board for notes and messages on a work-and-plan wall.
- » Bring order to open shelves with basket trays that can hold magazines, brochures, or papers.
- » Check home centers for cork tiles that you can glue to a wall, creating a corkboard for page and photo review or memos.
- » Don't forget home fragrance products.
- » Drape a throw over the wingchair for those long read-through sessions.
- » Hang a decorative mirror on the inside of a cabinet door or somewhere handy so you can check your appearance before you answer the door.
- » Include a TV, so you can monitor the news and that must-see program. An audio system can provide pleasant background music, too.
- » Let grouped diplomas, certificates, awards, photos of family and friends, old maps from favorite vacations, framed book dust jackets, framed magazine covers, or other favorite things do duty as wall decor.
- » Place rolled architectural drawings or rolls of colorful wallpaper in a decorative umbrella stand, nail keg, or covered cardboard box.
- » Put a large, decorative, easy-to-read calendar within sight.
- » Stencil inspirational quotes on one or more of the walls just below the cove molding or on a focal wall.

- » Looking at different types of media rooms
- » Converting an existing space to a media room
- » Creating the home theater of your dreams
- » Making your media room shine

Chapter 20

Making the Most of Media Rooms

Media rooms offer unprecedented experiences in screening entertainment. Whether originally built with your house or converted from an existing room, these spaces control light, balance sound, and provide comfort — all in style, of course.

In this chapter, you find out the basic requirements for media rooms, discover some helpful technical and planning resources, and explore tried-and-true decorating ideas. Planning any media room is serious business, but decorating it is fun!

Considering Your Options

An *entertainment center* is a TV or screen plus seating for a few people in a modest-sized, multifunctional space. An *entertainment hub*, a new trend in home design, makes the same entertainment — audio and video — simultaneously available throughout the house.

Home theater equipment meets even stricter demands. Seating placement for best sight and sound is determined by screen size and viewing angles, speaker

placement, and size of seating. Home theaters often have luxury movie theater-type seating and other theatrical touches that distinguish them from media rooms.

Unless you're designing and building your house from the ground up with an unlimited budget, you're constrained by either space or money — or, more likely, both. A home theater might be calling your name, but you may be more likely to fit an entertainment center in your basement.

Converting Spaces to Media Rooms

Consider two things when choosing a room in your home for a media room: the equipment and the space. Both must work together for best viewing.

Considering the basic elements

Before you get too far down the path of designing the media room of your dreams, be realistic about three key elements:

- » **Room shape:** Room shape affects sound. Rectangular rooms are recommended (as opposed to square or L-shaped rooms). In a rectangular room, the TV should be placed on a short wall (manufacturers will recommend speaker placement). The amount of available wall space will limit the size of TV you buy and whether you place it in a cabinet, on a stand, or on the wall.
- » **Seating:** For comfortable viewing, seating should be directly in front of the TV, positioned so that the center of the screen is at eye level. Place seating at a distance that is 1.5 to 2.5 times the diagonal (corner-to-corner) size of the screen.



TIP

When you buy a TV, it'll be labeled with this diagonal width, so a 65-inch TV measures 65 inches from corner to corner (diagonally). Multiply 65 inches times 1.5 and 2.5, and your seating should be 97.5 inches to 162.5 inches (or about 8 to 13.5 feet) away from the TV.

Sectional sofas are designed for watching TV, but a sofa plus a loveseat and upholstered lounge chairs would work, too. Kids (and some adults) like bean bags.



TIP

Add a handy table for snacks and drinks. Arrange the seating/viewing area so that room traffic flows around and not through it. For floating sofas (not backed up against a wall), place a narrow table (called a library table) behind the sofa and hang art on the wall.



TIP

- » **Light:** Control sunlight and lighting for best viewing. Use blackout curtains or shades. Add dimmer switches to ceiling lights. Sconces, can lights, and ambient lighting work best.

Reflective light bounces off the screen, so use matte-finish paint on walls and ceiling.

Transforming spaces

You can turn almost any unused space into a media room, but long, rectangular room shapes are ideal. Any of the following can work:

- » **Attics:** Check with a structural engineer to be sure that the floor can support the weight of furnishings and people.
- » **Basements:** Ideally shaped for a home theater, basements have load-bearing floors and can be soundproofed and finished out.
- » **Dining rooms:** Considering that the media room will be used every day by the whole family, converting the dining room — often, a seldom used space — is a no-brainer.
- » **Spare bedroom:** The square shape of most bedrooms will limit the size of TV you can use. Just make sure you have enough seating distance by using the seating formula in the preceding section.

Designing a Home Theater

Having your own theater at home is an exciting idea! Home theater systems (sound system, TV, wiring, and so on), seating, lighting, and home theater installation from a qualified professional can be well worth the investment. Figure 20-1 shows a home theater with style.



WARNING

Make sure you set up your system optimally to be compatible with vision/sound technology. The two main audiovisual systems that offer the highest-quality experiences are Dolby and THX. Do your homework for Dolby home theater at www.dolby.com/about/support/guide/home-theater-setup/planning/#gref. Go to www.thx.com/room-size for THX room dimension setups. Most equipment manufactured currently can work with either system.

FIGURE 20-1:
A home theater — as the name suggests — is like having your very own movie theater in your home.



Photograph courtesy of Mark Candelaria, AIA (www.candelariadesign.com); photograph by Dino Tonn



TIP

A home theater specialist will design your home theater with you, tailoring your design to meet your budget. Key factors that determine the cost of a theater are how much technology and finishes go into it.

When it comes to audio, the main components of sound systems are receivers, amplifiers, and speakers. The key to great sound is properly planning the types, quantities, and locations for the speakers. Talk with your home theater specialist about what would work best in your space.

HDTVs are available in large sizes, but if it's a real at-the-theater experience you want, choose a projector for a very large image. The pros say that a projector is less tiring on the eyes. Consult with your home theater specialist to see what's possible in your space.

Decorating a Media Room

After all the technical planning is done, the fun begins! If your entertainment center is to be part of the existing living room and decor is decided, tweak the look.

In a media room of its own, the look can be unified with the rest of the house or it can have its own look. Pick a period, style, or theme that creates the excitement you want viewers to feel when they walk into the room. Figure 20-2 shows how one designer handled traditional decor.



FIGURE 20-2:
A flat-screen
TV over a
fireplace creates
a cozy space.

*Photograph courtesy of Mark Candelaria, AIA (www.candelariadesign.com);
photograph by Dino Tonn*

If you're starting with a blank slate for your media room — all new furnishings — start by selecting the seating. Now is your chance to buy a sofa and chairs designed with viewing in mind. The number and kinds of choices for modestly sized, typical residential rooms is daunting.

Super-soft recliners with lumbar support, heat, massage, and removable armrests with beverage cup holders are a hit. One design is configurable; that is chairs snuggle up to one another, saving floor space. Compact well-padded tufted barrel chairs are another option. So is a floor lounge game chair — it looks like a big, tufted L-shaped pillow (a step up from a beanbag).



TIP

Seating must be hard wearing, so buy the best quality your budget will allow. This means leather not pleather, which in our experience delaminates after just a little wear. If you prefer a cloth cover, check out chairs with Sunbrella upholstery in designs by Joe Ruggiero. Wipe-clean covers are a good idea if you'll be snacking in

front of the TV (and who doesn't?). The color of your seating will influence your color scheme.

In choosing a color for walls, keep in mind that neutral colors aid concentration. Dark colors add a sense of mystery, great for a room used mostly for movie watching.

Floors should be carpeted for best acoustics. Play up your theme with a patterned carpet. Here you can choose a wilder, more themed pattern than you would use in a living room. Carpet tiles are a good idea because you can easily replace damaged tiles without breaking the bank. (Buy extra tiles for this purpose when placing your original order.)

To keep the focus on the TV screen, play down window treatments. Their main purpose is to block light. Blackout curtains are preferable, and affordable ready-made curtains come in a wide variety of colors, textures, sizes, and styles. Curtains should extend beyond the window frame, and the sides should hang snug to the wall. A cornice will prevent light seepage at the top of the curtain (see Chapter 15).

Accessories — whether serious or light-hearted — should underscore your theme. Movie genres — romance, mystery, action, or Western — are great themes. Choosing accessories will be a breeze — and a lot of fun! Movie posters (framed and unframed) can be hung singly, in pairs, or to cover an entire wall. You can find “movie reel” door pulls, side tables, and beverage racks at TheaterSeatStore (www.theaterseatstore.com).

If you're a travel buff, blow up poster-size images from your travels. A mural-size landscape would be exciting!

6

Transforming Sleeping, Living, Dining, and Other Spaces

IN THIS PART . . .

Restore your soul with great style and high function to promote good sleep in your bedroom.

Make the most of living rooms with high-function comfort and loads of style.

Design a dining room that can take on multiple functions in a pinch.

Have fun decorating other spaces and bonus areas (like attics, basements, and porches).

- » Identifying your bedroom's functions
- » Creating dreamy bedding
- » Arranging your bedroom's furniture
- » Finding a place to store your stuff
- » Planning for the needs of other bedroom users

Chapter **21**

Styling Bedrooms

To sleep, perchance to dream . . . and so much more. The bedroom serves many functions — catching alone time, dressing, exercising, reading, sharing intimacy, watching TV, and more. Meeting all these functions within a room's limited space — most bedrooms average a modest 10 by 12 feet — and making it dreamy can be a tough challenge.

In this chapter, you consider all the functions your bedroom serves and get tips on personalizing your bedroom to suit your needs. You find out how to make the most of the space you have and how to select a bed, bed coverings, a mattress, and pillows. You also find ways to maximize your storage space. Finally, this chapter provides great suggestions for ways to tailor a bedroom for the people who will be using it.

Considering Function First

Bedroom basics include the right size and style of bed, storage space for clothing, a nightstand, and task lighting. Beyond the basics, you may want to include other conveniences of contemporary life, such as a TV and DVD player; a stereo; storage space for videos, DVDs, or CDs; a desk for reading and writing; and a chair or two for lounging.



TIP

A good first step is to take an inventory of your activities. Answer the following questions to determine your needs and wants:

- » Who occupies this bedroom?
- » What is the personal style of its occupant? (See Chapter 11 for help answering this question.)
- » What will you and your family (or guests) use the bedroom for? (Some possibilities include nighttime and daytime sleeping, reading, studying, watching TV, listening to music, using the computer, grooming, dressing, and exercising.)
- » What size (and how many) beds will you have in the room?
 - Twin
 - Full/double
 - Queen
 - King
 - California king
 - Custom
- » What style or type of bed will you have?
- » What additional furnishings do you need in the room?
 - Armoire
 - Bureau
 - Chaise lounge
 - Convertible sofa bed
 - Desk and chair
 - Dresser
 - Easy chair
 - Footlocker
 - Hope chest
 - Media cabinet
 - Mirrors

- Nightstand
- Reclining chair
- Sofa or love seat
- Table
- Vanity table
- » Where do you need task lighting?
 - Bedsides
 - Desk
 - Tables
 - Vanity table
- » What equipment do you need for the room?
 - Answering machine
 - Computer
 - DVD player
 - Fax machine
 - Intercom
 - Stereo
 - Telephone
 - Television

Keeping your answers to the preceding questions in mind, take a look at the sections in this chapter that pertain to your specific decorating needs.

Selecting the Right Bed Type

To figure out which bed suits your decorating needs, think about the bed you currently have: its size, its style (which may be the starting point for your room's style), and the comfort of the mattress. Are you satisfied with what you have? Or are you looking to purchase something new? If a new bed is within your budget, keep reading for tips on selecting the best option for your space.

Fitting your room (and your body)

Before you go shopping for a bed, figure out the maximum amount of space your bed can take up. A too-big bed makes it nearly impossible to move around. You need adequate space to walk through the room, open closet doors and drawers, and place other furnishings. (For help calculating your available space, see Chapter 3.)

Turning the bed sideways along a wall is one option because it gives you plenty of floor space — a perfect solution for small rooms or rooms with beautiful flooring. To dress it up, install a *corona* (a crown-shaped piece) and drape fabric from it over the sides of the bed. Or, use a king-size headboard — it will work for any size bed. Add stacks of pillows to complete the look.

MAKING YOUR OWN HEADBOARD

You don't need to spend a lot of money to get a great look. Check out the following suggestions for quick, easy, and inexpensive headboards:

- **Antique shutters:** Attach shutters to the wall at the head of your bed. (Antique ones from the local salvage yard add a true cottage flavor.)
- **Demi-canopy:** Attach a curtain rod shaped like a semicircle on the wall near the ceiling, leaving a space of about 2 to 3 inches for the top of the curtain (sometimes called a *curtain heading*). These special rods are available at craft stores, decorating shops, and drapery makers. Then hang ready-made curtains long enough to reach the floor.
- **Pillowcases:** Above the bed, firmly install a drapery rod that extends the bed's width. Add grosgrain ribbon tabs at intervals along one side of the pillowcases. Insert pillows into the pillowcases, and then hang them on the rod as a headboard.
- **Standing screen:** Place a standing screen between your bed and the wall. If the screen needs stability, you can secure it to the wall.
- **Tapestry or quilt:** Hang a tapestry or quilt on the wall behind your bed. Make sure it's fastened securely by drilling hooks into the wall or by installing a rod supported by brackets. Make sure that your hanging isn't so fragile that rubbing against it will damage the tapestry.
- **Wagon wheel:** An old wagon wheel makes a natural headboard for a child's twin bed. Fasten a wheel securely at the height that you like.
- **Wrought-iron gate:** Check out the salvage yard for an old iron gate that you can secure to the wall for a headboard. These gates add plenty of Old World charm to any bedroom.



REMEMBER

You have to be able to get the bed through the bedroom door. Measure all the door openings and hallways. You may have to take the doors off the frames in order to squeeze the bed through.

The mattress you choose should be at least 3 inches longer than the height of the tallest person sleeping on it. The standard mattress sizes are as follows:



TIP

» **Twin:** 39 inches wide by 75 inches long

If you plan to use two twin beds, allow a minimum of 24 inches between them or place a nightstand between them.

» **Extra-long twin:** 38 inches wide by 80 inches long

» **Double:** 54 inches wide by 75 inches long

» **Queen:** 60 inches wide by 80 inches long

» **King:** 76 to 78 inches wide by 80 inches long

» **California king:** 72 inches wide by 84 inches long

To find out how much floor space a bed will take up, consider the following elements of a bed and add the appropriate measurements to the basic mattress size:

» **Bed covering:** Add 3 inches to both the bed's width and length.

» **Changing the bed covering:** In order to comfortably change the bed coverings, add 15 inches of clear space around the bed.

» **Footboard:** Add 3 to 4 inches to the bed's length.

» **Headboard:** Add another 3 to 4 inches to the bed's length.



TIP

Also keep in mind the bed's height. You may want a higher or lower bed for decorative reasons or for physical comfort. Here are some tips:

» Adding an extra box spring to a bed set can raise a bed high enough for you to have a better view out your window.

» A simple low metal frame may be all that's needed to raise a bed to the exact height of a windowsill, so the window and the view out of it aren't obstructed.

Getting comfortable

No objective industry standards exist for labeling mattresses, which means that the quality of firmness and support varies from maker to maker. When you go mattress shopping, wear comfortable clothing. Test out the mattresses by getting

into the positions you actually sleep in — and expect to take a few minutes to fully relax. Getting a feel — literally — for a mattress is the best way to tell if it's right for you.



REMEMBER

Read the labels for specific information on the number and kinds of layers; the number, type, and construction of the coils; and any special features. Look carefully at the cutaway sample that demonstrates the mattress's construction.

The most common type of mattress is the innerspring, which features tempered spring coils covered by layers of upholstery. The more coils, the better — the minimum is 400 and the recommended is 600 or more. Buy the best mattress you can afford.



TIP

When you buy a mattress, always buy the matching box spring — they're designed to work together as a system. Don't combine a new mattress with old box springs, because your mattress won't get the support it needs.

If you need a hypoallergenic mattress, a good alternative is a foam mattress made of natural latex rubber. The foam density should measure at least 2 pounds per cubic foot. The higher the density, the better the foam. But remember: You still need a box spring or foundation to support a foam mattress.

Finding great style

Add personal style instantly with a dramatic bed. Because your bed is the dominant furnishing in your bedroom, choose a style that suits your taste.



REMEMBER

You spend one-third of your life sleeping (or at least you *should!*), so spend it sleeping in beauty. Beds come in a variety of styles, so you can always find one that complements your decorating scheme. See Figure 21-1 for a great take on low-key contemporary drama.

Here are the seven most common styles of beds:

» **Captain's bed:** Inspired by the beds made for ships, captain's beds feature a drawer beneath the mattress for storage — a plus when you need more storage. They're often used in children's and teenagers' rooms because they hold tons of stuff. They're available in a range of sizes and styles. The frame's top edge should be lower than the mattress top to prevent banging your knees when you crawl into bed.

» **Daybed:** These beds are intended for napping — or even sitting — during the day. They're usually more compactly sized than standard beds and typically are placed sideways along a wall to save space. (Some double as sofas.)

FIGURE 21-1:
A hotel-style
headboard adds
drama to a
serene bedroom.



Photograph courtesy of John Lyle (www.johnlyledesign.com); photograph by Andrew Welch



TIP

- » **Four-poster bed:** This bed features four vertical posts and usually a headboard and footboard. Four-poster beds come in a variety of styles, from Traditional to Contemporary (see Chapters 8 and 9 for more about these styles). Four-posters are good choices for rooms with high ceilings or large rooms where anything else would seem proportionately too small.
- » **Hollywood bed:** A Hollywood bed is a very low bed, with or without a headboard. Sleek and contemporary, this style doesn't take up much space visually. A Hollywood bed's headboard is very tailored, with straight lines.
- » **Platform bed:** A platform bed is a mattress "floating" on a stage-like box that raises the bed 1 to 2 (or more) feet off the floor. The platform bed adds a streamlined sense of drama and is especially good for large, open spaces.

If the platform is more than one step high, include a handrail and allow an 8-inch toe kick (like those beneath kitchen cabinets) to prevent stubbed toes.
- » **Sleigh bed:** Sleigh beds are usually very high, with slightly curved headboards and somewhat lower, curved footboards, drawing on the design of 19th-century sleighs. Sleigh beds may feature heavy carving or simple, plain wood surfaces. Sleigh beds generally aren't for very small spaces, because they're heavy in appearance.
- » **Tester (canopy) bed:** A tester (or canopy) bed is a draped four-poster bed. Originally designed for warmth and comfort, a canopy bed has draped fabric covering the top and sides. Most people choose canopy beds today for a romantic sense of luxury and privacy, especially in spacious rooms. Testers come in Traditional and Contemporary designs.

CREATING A BED FIT FOR A KING OR QUEEN

Alfredo Brito, of Miami-based Brito Interiors, created marvelous bed hangings from crown molding and drapes for his own Renaissance-style bedroom. You can adapt his technique to suit any style.

Select thick crown molding and run the molding all around the room and over door openings until you get to the bed area. You'll need two extra 1-foot lengths of molding to create sidepieces for the canopy effect. Attach these two sidepieces to a length of molding that is a few inches wider than your bed.

For drapes, pick any sort of drape you prefer. If you're on a budget, you can even use four (or more) queen- or king-size sheets. Other possibilities include thick, plush velvet for a royal touch (it's great for colder climates, too) or sheer, gauzy drapes for a summery mood. The amount and type of pleating you use influences the total. Alfredo says for ultra-romantic looks, use plenty of pleats, and for a masculine look use fewer. You need at least twice the total length of the sides and backs of the molding for a luxurious look. Attach the fabric to a soft valance. For extra glam, affix fringe to the top edge and sides of drapes. Attach the soft valance to the inside edge of the crown molding and across the back wall.

For lighting that's functional and decorative, Brito suggests installing a pair of wall sconces or swing arm lamps about midway between the top of the bed and the crown molding. The light provides a dramatic focal point and illumination for reading at night.

Beautifying Your Bed

Dressing a bed beautifully is an art. Your sheets, pillows, and bedspread reflect your style, and they're every bit as important as the furniture you choose. The way your bed looks and feels plays a huge part in your comfort, so spend some time thinking about what you want, and have fun planning! Give thought to thread count (the higher the count, the silkier the texture), care, and instructions (washable is less expensive than dry-clean only).

Dressing your bed

Start by picking out sheets that coordinate with your color scheme and personal style. Pick solids, patterns, or prints that match your bedroom's mood. If you enjoy variety, select three sheet sets that work with each other, and then mix and

match. Floral patterns can easily mix with both solids and stripes to create interesting, varied effects.

When you buy sheets, read the label for information about what they're made of and how they're made. Check the sheet's feel, or *hand*, to make sure. Printing can stiffen sheets.



TIP

Buy at least one white or ivory set of sheets. Have on hand a minimum of three sets of sheets — one on the bed, one in the closet, and one in the laundry, at any given time.

A dust ruffle or bed skirt is great for hiding the ugly box spring and the frame legs. If you don't like dust ruffles or more tailored bed skirts, cover the box spring with a flat sheet tucked to fit — an inexpensive and tasteful solution (as long as the bed's legs don't show).



TIP

An inexpensive and easy way to freshen up your bedroom or furnish your spare bedroom is with a “bed in a box” — a coordinated set of a comforter, dust ruffle, pillowcases, and sheets for around \$50.

You can also dress a bed with a floor-length bedspread or a coverlet, comforter, or duvet that simply tops the bed area. A coverlet is thin like a bedspread (both are Traditional ways to cover a bed). A comforter or quilt is generally decorative and is a more Contemporary bed dressing. A duvet is a European, down-filled comforter that comes in a plain casing and is designed to be inserted into a duvet cover, which is like a giant pillowcase. A duvet cover can also go over a comforter for a quick change.

The Traditional bedspread generally covers the pillows to create a seamless top. But if you like more romance, add decorative little pillows, pile on your favorite dolls or stuffed animals, or drape throws or extra quilts over the top.

Draping a bed adds plenty of drama, pattern, texture, and interest. If you have high ceilings, a tester (canopy) bed fits the space well. For Traditional bedrooms, use traditional fabrics (toile, chintz, and classic florals are good choices) and pick a Traditional-style bed. Use simpler draperies with tailored pleats to drape a Contemporary bed frame. Mosquito netting adds sheer mystery. Attach netting to the ceiling with simple hoops, or buy netting already attached to a frame.

Making pillow talk

You can never have enough decorative pillows on your bed. For more Contemporary appeal, arrange pillows on the top of the bed, propping them artfully against the headboard. For a stylish mix, use two or more European-size pillows, which

are large, square shapes that show nicely behind a rectangular pillow. Stack a mix of regular pillows and pillows covered with dramatic shams.



TIP

Add drama to the entire look by choosing shams with flanges and deep edges that are either tailored or ruffled. You can add dimension with round neck pillows or bolsters and small accent pillows. Or add texture by mixing weaves, finishes, laces, and tapestry.

Arranging Your Furniture

Any bedroom's focal point is the bed, and other furnishings play a supporting role. Bedroom furniture is traditionally arranged according to a few general rules. Follow these guidelines:

- » **Traditionally, people tend to place a double, queen, or king bed against the center of the wall opposite the main door to the room.** With this arrangement, the headboard is the center of attention as you enter the room.

If your room's dimensions prevent you from positioning your bed on the wall across from the door, other possible choices depend on which walls are long enough to accommodate the bed. Diagonal placement works well when you have the space.

- » **Don't place a bed under a window if the window will frequently be open.** Open windows can create uncomfortable drafts. Positioning a bed between two windows, however, works well.

If your home is air-conditioned or heated year-round and the windows are seldom open, you may be able to ignore this rule.

- » **Don't place the bed where it obstructs a door into the room or a walkway through the room.**

- » **Consider nontraditional furniture arrangements if doing so will free up space or use space in a more interesting way.** For example, a bed may look dramatic placed in front of a secure window; on a diagonal, which takes up extra space; sideways along a wall, to maximize floor space; or in an alcove (a technique called *lit clos*).



TIP

- » **If your closet is large enough and you want to free up floor space, put your chest of drawers inside a walk-in closet.** Doing this lets you add additional furniture, such as a writing desk, a seating group, or a big-screen TV, to transform any bedroom into a luxury suite.

Nightstands, tables, and task lighting aren't just simple accessories — they're necessities. They provide surface space for accessories, lamps, and necessities. (See Figure 21-2 for a lovely mix of contemporary furnishings in a traditional wainscot room.)



FIGURE 21-2:
Mixing traditional
with modern
furnishings looks
contemporary.

Photograph courtesy of Sherwin-Williams

Nightstands also have drawers that let you keep medicines, personal items, and supplies out of sight. Place nightstands on each side of the bed for storage. Place a lamp — any kind you prefer — for reading in bed. (If you're short on surface space, hang pendant lamps or swing arms lamps. For more on lighting, see Chapter 16.)

You can inventively use tables of various heights for function and decoration. Place an armless slipper chair next to a low table for a cozy reading spot. Nestle two wing chairs around a higher table for an intimate coffee and conversation spot. For a touch of personal style, drape a round table (you can buy very inexpensive, ready-to-assemble ones) with a favorite sheet or coverlet.

Storing Your Stuff

Although storage space — for clothing, shoes, accessories, and myriad other things — is a necessity in any bedroom, space is usually at a premium given the limited space of most bedrooms and closets. The first step in tackling the storage issue is to analyze what you already have and compare it to what you need. Then you can figure out how to make the most of your bedroom space. With just a few simple steps, your bedroom can accommodate virtually all your storage needs.

Taking stock of your storage needs

Before tackling the storage space in your bedroom, determine how much space you have and how much space you need. The following questions help you do just that:

- » How many of the following storage facilities do you need?
 - Armoire
 - Cabinets
 - Closets
 - Drawers
 - Media center
 - Shelves
 - Walk-in closets
- » How much hanging storage do you need for coats, dresses, pants, shirts/blouses, skirts, and suits? (Measure in linear feet.)
- » How much shelving space do you need? (Measure the height and width of folded garments.)
- » How many shallow drawers (2 inches deep) and deep drawers (4 or more inches deep) do you need?
- » How many pairs of boots, sandals, shoes, and sneakers do you need room for?

Maximizing storage space

After you've determined your storage needs, you can start thinking about ways to get the most out of the space you have. Try these few suggestions for maximizing storage space:



REMEMBER



TIP

- » Most people wear only about 20 percent of all the clothing and shoes they own; the other 80 percent takes up space. So, periodically weed out the out-of-date items. Charities are happy to have the power suits you wore back in the '90s.
- » Use wire-shelving systems, rods hung at various heights, hooks, and shoe racks in your closets to use the space efficiently.
- » Use an oversize armoire or glass-fronted bookcase as a media cabinet. The drawers and shelves allow you to store clothing and other things, and your TV is out of the way and at an optimum height for viewing.
- » Stack a smaller chest of drawers on top of a larger chest of drawers or two. Make them look spiffy by painting them the same color and adding decorative stenciling. (Fasten the units together in the back with simple hardware and secure to the wall or floor to prevent them from tipping over, especially if you have small children.) This technique allows you to store a large amount in a small space — and it looks great, too!

Decorating for Your Bedrooms' Needs

Bedrooms must meet the needs of their users, and all types of users have unique needs. Whether you're decorating a primary bedroom, a guest room, or a child's room, the following sections provide you with great tips.

Primary bedrooms

A primary bedroom doesn't have to be huge, but it does need to offer certain amenities. If your space is less masterful than you want, take a look at some of the following suggestions for decorating your bedroom:

- » **Make the bedroom look larger by eliminating clutter.** Take out any excess accessories and store necessities in drawers or closets.
- » **Use only necessary furniture.** If you can, push a chest of drawers into a walk-in closet to free up floor space.
- » **Keep the bed visually low.** Use a headboard, but don't use a footboard. Avoid four-poster beds because they tend to take up space visually, and that makes the room seem smaller.
- » **Keep all your furniture — like the rest of your color scheme — light.** Light-colored furniture, walls, floors, window treatments, and bedding make a room seem bigger.

Regardless of your primary bedroom's size, the following tips can help you to make it as comfortable as possible:

- » **Add bedside tables that are as big as the space allows.** If you read or watch TV in bed, you'll find these tables helpful. You can buy restaurant cafe tables for very little money and drape them with quilts.
- » **Try to make room for at least one comfortable chair.** Chairs are great for company on a sick day, for daytime resting, or for reading.
- » **Consider carpeting all bedroom floors to reduce noise.** Carpeting is soft and warm for the feet.
- » **Add a lady's desk — a small, delicately proportioned furnishing for writing letters — if you have room.**

Teen bedrooms

Teenagers usually know what they want in a bedroom. They need storage for their books, music, and collections of just about anything you can name. They also have firm ideas about style and colors, so ask! And when your kid requests a wild color, do your best to persuade them to use it as an accent. Choose neutral furnishings that can adapt to a new color scheme just in case your teen's taste changes overnight.

More and more activities, from spending time online to hanging out with friends, take place in a teen's room. Extra seating and small tables provide space for friends. Keep furnishings practical and easy to care for.

Children's bedrooms



TIP

Plan a nursery with your child's future years in mind. But from the beginning, make room for a changing table near the crib. As always, keep safety in mind. The following tips can help you:

- » **Choose chests and cabinets that can't be tipped over (even when drawers are opened and a child crawls up and into them).** This may call for fastening them to the wall for security.
- » **Double-check that cribs and bunk beds meet federal safety standards.** Check to see that mattresses fit snugly against the crib's sides. Slats, spindles, rods, and corner posts should be no more than $2\frac{3}{8}$ inches apart from each other. Make sure a child can't release the drop side of a crib.

- » **Eliminate any small throw rugs on slippery floors.** Little ones can trip over these hazards.
- » **Equip all electrical outlets with plastic safeguard plugs.** Young children love to stick their fingers where they don't belong.
- » **Find hardware that's rounded and sanded and has no sharp edges.** The smoother the hardware, the less the chance of cuts.
- » **Keep cribs away from windows and window blind cords.** Keep your little ones from falling out of windows or getting wrapped in cords by placing them a safe distance away.
- » **Make sure all flooring is skidproof.**
- » **Select bunk beds with sturdy ladders, handrails, and safety rails.**



REMEMBER

Make sure you have a guest bed for sleepovers. A trundle bed, which stores a second bed beneath a regular one, is ideal for children's rooms.

Guest rooms



TIP

Setting aside a room for guests makes their stay more comfortable not only for them, but also for you. Furnish the guest room with a marvelous bed and all the necessary furnishings. Check out the following suggestions for ways to make your guest room comfortable:

- » **Buy a handsome, space-saving daybed or sofa bed that fits smartly against the wall and out of the way.** The versatility of these beds makes them a delightful option in a home office or other double-duty room. A Murphy bed that hides away in a closet is another option.
- » **Consider fitting your guest room with a telephone, a TV, a connection for getting online, and a mini-fridge filled with water, juices, and snacks.** Be warned — your guests may never leave.
- » **Dedicate two sets of sheets, a comforter, a duvet cover, and pillows and pillow shams to your guest room.** Store them in the guest closet or guest bathroom in case your guests need anything during the night.
- » **Make sure that your guest has plenty of closet space for hanging and drawer space for putting away personal items.** Place sachets in drawers and padded hangers in the closet for a posh touch.
- » **Use a queen bed.** Couples will appreciate the comfort. If you have two guest rooms, fit the second one with twin beds.

- » Figuring out your living room's functions
- » Spicing up your walls, ceilings, floors, and windows
- » Adding accessories

Chapter 22

Enlivening Living Rooms

Your living room, whether lived in a lot or used mostly on special occasions, is the place to make your personal style statement. Of course, you'll consider visitors' needs, but don't curb your enthusiasm for a particular color, furniture style, or accessories. Be free to express your taste. The world doesn't need another cookie-cutter living room.

In this chapter, we help you identify the many functions your living room may serve. We also offer tips on how to select furniture that meets your needs and looks stylish, too. We explain how to arrange your furniture for maximum aesthetics and function. Finally, we help you accessorize your living room to express your personal style.

Thinking about Function

Even formal living rooms should be flexible enough to handle multiple activities. If your living room also serves as a den or family room, you'll need multiple kinds of seating — upholstered for lounging, cushioned for game tables, and so on. If you have a separate den or family room, celebrate the differences with finer furnishings and a more formal feeling in the living room.

FRESH POINTS OF VIEW

Most people love variety. We can hardly wait for the next season and the changes it brings to our landscape. We find excitement in new fashions. We're inspired by new displays in retail shops and new exhibitions in art galleries. Change to our interiors brings a new appreciation for familiar objects because we see them in a new light. We've often worked with clients simply to rearrange a living room to give it new life. In some cases, we've switched out accessories, bringing in objects from the dining room or out of a cabinet. This is one of the least expensive ways to gain a new look.

Here are some ways you can change things up in your living room:

- **Change the furniture arrangement.** Maybe winter is over and there won't be roaring fires in the fireplace for a while — that means the sofa needs a new view. Place it at right angles to the fireplace instead. Add a couple of facing chairs to create a cozy conversation spot and an equally compelling focal point. Place the sofa that sat in front of a big window in a new location that allows a view of the flower garden.
- **Add a new focal point.** You've had your eye on a fabulous armoire at your favorite furniture store, and it's on sale. Buy it — it's yours! Now, where do you place it in the living room? Stand it opposite tall windows, so that one tall object balances the other. Add a few attention-getting accessories, and the armoire is your new beautiful focal point.
- **Paint.** Maybe you want to be daring and paint one wall in your pale yellow room a fire-engine red — a perfect backdrop for your red-and-yellow floral chintz sofa. That's also a good reason to move that sofa and hang a smashing landscape above it.
- **Add slipcovers to change up the look of a sofa.** When you take the time to slip-cover those three inherited but previously incompatible sofas, you can create a U-shaped seating arrangement that will make your too-big, lobby-like living room seem cozy as a country cottage.

Start your plan by listing all the activities that may take place in your living room. Ask yourself if you'll use the room for any of the following purposes:

- » Gathering with friends and family
- » Knitting or sewing
- » Listening to music
- » Playing board games or card games

- » Playing the piano
- » Reading
- » Spending time on your computer
- » Watching television
- » Writing letters

Leave out no activity, no matter how trivial it seems. Next, list the furniture and electrical equipment you need to make each function possible. Determine which of the following items you need:

- » Coffee table
- » Computer
- » Desk
- » DVD player
- » End tables
- » Entertainment center
- » Lamps
- » Lounge chair
- » Love seat
- » Occasional chairs
- » Ottomans
- » Piano
- » Sofa or couch
- » Stereo system
- » TV/video equipment



TIP

As you figure out your activities, you may think of places where activities take place. For example, the piano could (and should) fit on an inside wall, the sofa may work well near the fireplace, your rocking chair may be perfect near the window, and a reclining chair could face the TV. If you're not quite sure where each piece of furniture works best, read the next section to find plenty of great suggestions.

Putting your furniture in its place

Happiest furniture arrangements establish pleasing working relationships among individual pieces of furniture — all within a room’s context. Don’t think the furniture fits in your room only as you arranged it some time ago. You may have gained some new inspiration from a friend’s house, a store display, a magazine article or online. Don’t hesitate to explore new options for arranging existing furnishings. But if you have the opposite problem — so many possibilities that you can’t choose the best one — feel fortunate.



TIP

To see the many arrangement possibilities in *any* room, lay out various floor plans on paper (see Chapter 3). This technique is much easier than shoving a grand piano around a room! Use layout kits, with graph paper and to-scale furniture templates. Don’t be afraid to experiment with different locations and be open to being surprised.



REMEMBER

For some rooms, because of the location of architectural elements (such as windows, doors, and a fireplace), finding the perfect layout doesn’t come easily. Difficulties arise when a room has two focal points, areas where attention lingers. For instance, trying to situate a sofa in rooms with a TV and a fireplace or picture window is frustrating — how can you focus on two points? Occasionally, you may figure out a way to take advantage of both focal points, but sometimes you just have to choose one over the other. Take a look at the “Focusing on a focal point” section, later in this chapter, for more information.

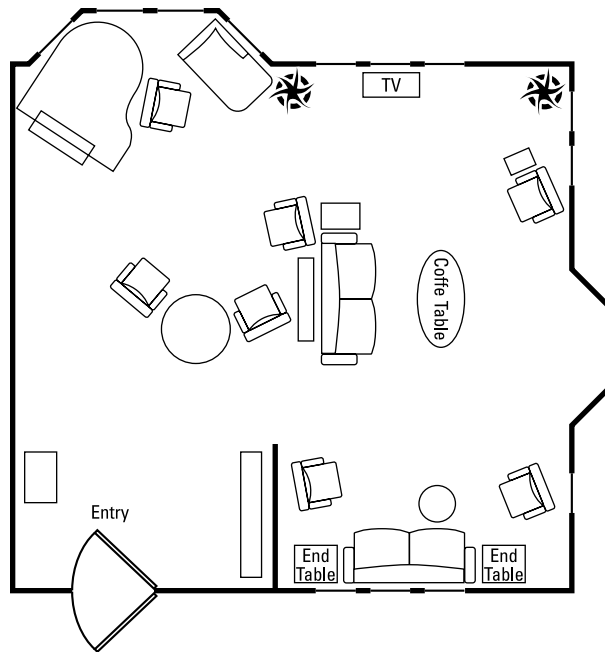
Checking out different layouts

To demonstrate that you can arrange a room in more than one way, we prepared four different layouts for a client’s living room. The one the client chose was not the one *we* would have chosen, but that’s the point of drawing several layouts — you can choose *your* personal favorite.

The first two arrangements take into consideration many functions. Each layout provides seating areas for big gatherings, small and large conversation groups, TV viewing, reading and writing, scenery watching, piano playing, and group sing-alongs.

In the first layout (see Figure 22-1), we arranged seating traditionally, with the large fireplace as the center of attention. The baby grand piano and chaise lounge make the bay window a second strong focal point, while the TV, placed in front of picture windows, is incidental. (Yes, the piano is near the window — not ideal, but sometimes this can’t be helped.)

FIGURE 22-1:
A Traditional
living room layout
with the fireplace
as the center of
attention.



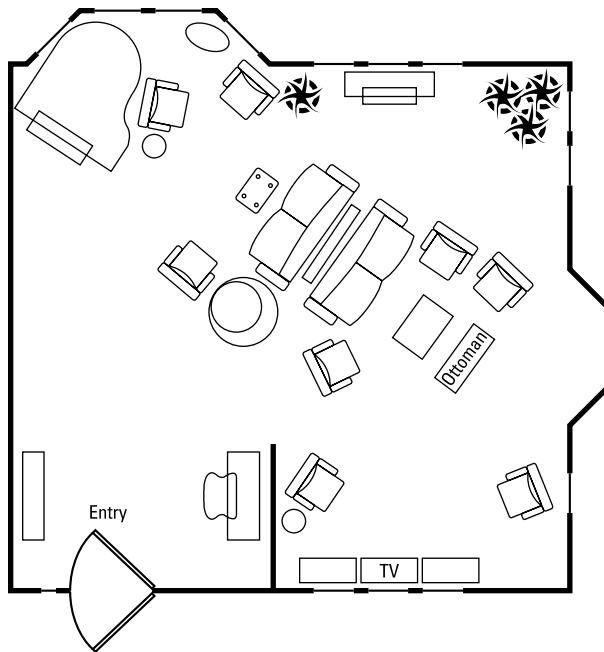
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In another plan (see Figure 22-2), back-to-back love seats create two living areas. The imposing fireplace draws the most attention, while the bay window and the grand piano play a supporting role. Your guests and you can see the TV from the love seat and lounge chairs placed at an angle.

In the third layout (see Figure 22-3), a Contemporary, L-shaped couch on a diagonal faces away from the windows. The fireplace is the strong focal point of the room, but this layout makes the TV more important. A necessary traffic path to the couch where guests will sit creates a separation between it and the lounge chairs. The grand piano sets in front of the bay window.

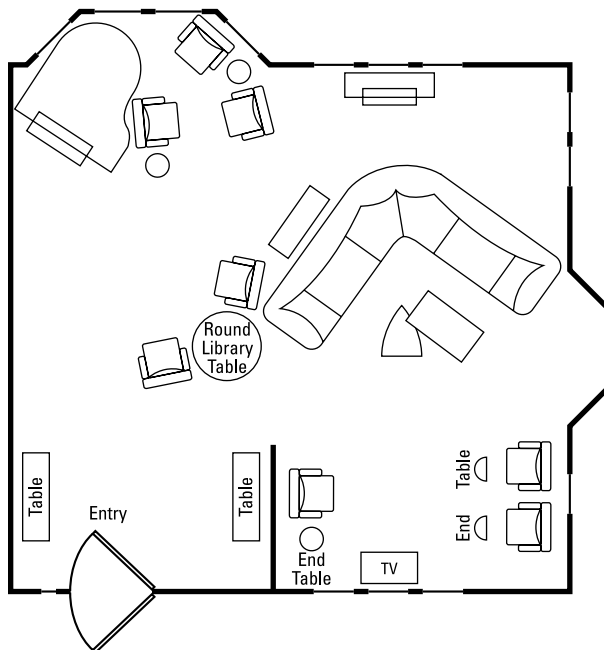
Finally, in the fourth layout (see Figure 22-4), two separate seating areas create a sharp distinction between indoor and outdoor focus, allowing room for both. The main seating area focuses on the fireplace but has a clear view of the TV. The secondary seating area makes the most of the bay window and outdoor scenery. And the grand piano, tucked behind the sofa, fits nicely with both seating areas.

FIGURE 22-2:
Two living areas,
with the help of
back-to-back
seating.



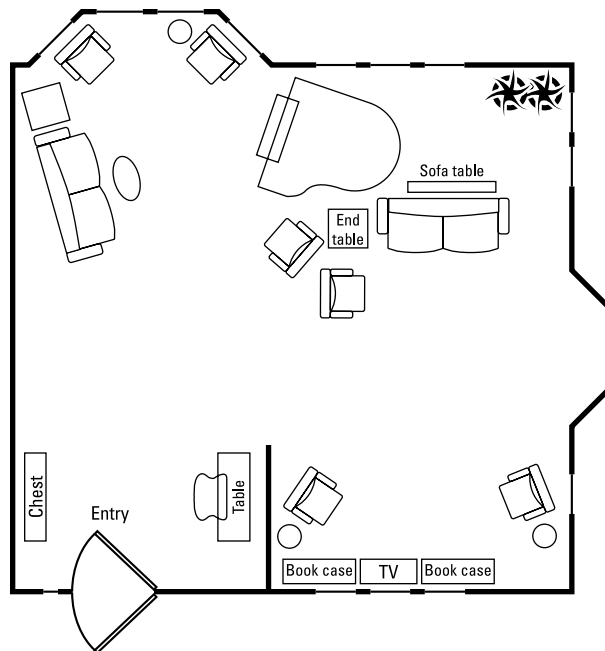
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FIGURE 22-3:
The L-shaped
couch places
focus on the TV.



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FIGURE 22-4:
Two seating
areas, with indoor
or outdoor focal
points.



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TIP

When arranging your furniture, consider architectural features. We followed some basic guidelines when we created the layouts in Figures 22-1 through 22-4. Check out the following suggestions for devising your own layout:

- » **Keep a piano in the background, so it doesn't obstruct the traffic flow.** If you have both a piano and a fireplace, place the piano opposite the fireplace wall, to balance the room. Serious musicians insist that a piano be on an interior wall, away from direct heating and cooling vents, because heat and cold changes affect pianos and their sound.
- » **Let the fireplace, a prominent element in any room, be the natural focal point that it is.** Creating the major seating area around the fireplace is natural.
- » **Nestle seating near a picture window — one that's large, with a beautiful view.** In the room with no fireplace, this becomes the focal point.
- » **The TV is a compelling focal point in any room.** Lots of comfortable seating, necessary for function, will beef up the visual impact.

Focusing on a focal point

Like any artistic composition, a well-designed room needs a *focal point* — a point of reference, a space that seems whole or complete and, for that reason, provides visual relief and rest. But what do you do with a room that doesn't have a natural attention-grabber like a fireplace or a large window?

You can create a focal point with an imposing piece of furniture. Secretaries, armoires, wall units, and media centers fill the bill. So do big buffets and handsome dressers and chests (who said they have to stay in the dining room or bedroom?). Make a dresser or chest even more important by hanging a big mirror or painting above it. Underscore this arrangement with a pair of decorative lamps and a real or faux floral arrangement.



TIP

Go even further, if you want, by adding small, decorative items in a *tablescape* (an artful arrangement of objects).

Discovering furniture-arranging basics



TIP

Some general guidelines exist to help you narrow down the almost endless possibilities of arrangement. Before trying to decide how to arrange your room, keep in mind the following suggestions:

- » Arrange for traffic *not* to pass between people and the TV or through a conversation area.
- » Avoid placing furniture where it interferes with the operation of doors and windows.
- » Furniture placed on the diagonal creates excitement and contrast. If its unity you want, then let furniture parallel the wall.
- » Keep traffic from interfering with activities within the room by leaving a wall free of furniture. Move the sofa away from the wall and into the room so that traffic flows behind the sofa.
- » Group chairs a comfortable 3 to 4 feet apart, but not further, for conversational ease.
- » Don't ignore an awkward space. Make the most of it by building in a bookshelf, window seat, closet, or some such. True, you can't take a built-in with you if you move, but it will probably add resale value.
- » Don't make a beautiful chair a solo act — place a small table near it for a cup or glass.

- » Shield your living room for more privacy by placing a standing, folding screen at right angles to the wall if the front door to your house opens directly into your living room.
- » Large rooms are imposing. If yours seems alienating, make it more friendly by creating more than one seating group and multiple activity areas.

Staging a Great Backdrop

Walls, floors, ceilings, and windows form a background not only for your furniture, but also for you. Choosing the materials to use for each of these elements involves practical, aesthetic, and budget considerations. Make a clear distinction between what you want and what you need, especially if you don't necessarily *need* everything you *want*. For example, if your house is home to small children and pets, you need something more practical than the white rug that you love.



TIP

For unity, plan adjoining rooms that are openly visible to each other as though you were dealing with one space. Different treatments result in varying degrees of unity. For greatest unity, use the same wall color in each. For a subtle contrast, switch to a slightly lighter tint or darker shade of the same color for the adjoining room. A clever unifying effect is a positive/negative design that treats one room as a positive (light background, dark furnishings) and the other as a negative (dark background, light furnishings).

Settling on wall materials

Walls, the greatest background area of any room, determine a room's mood. You can choose from many different materials to cover your walls. Some popular choices include paint in plain or faux finishes, wall covering (not all wallpapers are paper), and paneling (see Chapter 12 for more information on each).

You'll seldom need to choose just one of these popular materials. More often, combining materials (paint and wall covering, wall covering and paneling) provides the best solution for achieving your goals.

Your house has many rooms, several walls, and great opportunities to use plenty of different materials. Consider two factors first: the room's architectural style and its actual architectural features. Traditional wall coverings, fabrics, paint colors and paneling are natural choices for traditional architecture. If wall paneling is already in place, lucky you, you've saved a small fortune. Updating traditional

architecture with more contemporary colors, patterns and textures is younger, fresher, and probably more personal.

Contemporary materials are at home in a Contemporary structure. Mirror, glass, metallics, textured wall coverings and fabrics are all at home here. But does that mean you can't use chintz? That probably depends on the chintz — and your own taste. Don't rule out anything before giving it a very good look-see. Learn to trust your own eyes.

With any style, period, or mood, keep in mind that texture in any material not only adds tactile interest, but also affects space in the following ways:

- » The lighter, smoother, and silkier the texture of all surfaces (walls, floors, and ceiling), the airier the space.
- » The rougher, coarser, and furrier the background textures, the smaller (and perhaps cozier) the room.

Texture is particularly important to neutral-color schemes, popular in Contemporary spaces and in conservative living rooms. If neutrals are your cup of tea, add excitement by adding rich texture.

Paint

Paint is an inexpensive source of color, a powerful mood maker. Use it as a versatile decorating tool to visually reshape an architecturally deficient room (one that's too long, short, square; Chapter 5 includes some great tips). Other colorful materials — wall coverings, ceramic tile, and fabrics — may do the same job as paint, but at a higher cost for materials and labor. Painting a room has the following advantages:

- » **Painting, not always cheap, is usually cheaper than other choices — especially if you do the painting.** Generally, the cost of a bucket of paint compared to other wall coverings is much lower.
- » **Painting is easy.** Even amateurs can paint a room — just do the prep work and use the right paints and materials. Your local paint store can point you in the right direction.
- » **Painting is fast.** Well, perhaps faster if you're a do-it-yourselfer, because you decide how quickly you can paint. Usually, a freshly painted room can happen in a day or so, but it may take weeks to do a more complex project. Consider paint for instant gratification.

» **Painting isn't permanent.** You can easily change and repaint your wall's colors as your mood changes. (And repainting is quicker, easier and cheaper than replacing wallpaper.)

Paint allows anyone to be as daring with color as they like! For example, a friend's house with traditional closed-door rooms has a burnt-orange dining room, an apple-green living room, one bedroom in light yellow, and another bedroom in baby blue. In a client's Florida home, we matched the outsides of bedroom doors with the tropical colors of the rugs within — yellow, blue, and flamingo pink. Why not make your rooms pop and come to life, even in an open floor plan? Just take extra care in selecting colors that not only look great individually but work well together!



TIP

Paint can provide pattern, too. Think of stenciling to create a wall covering—like pattern over the entire wall. You can create your own stencil or use a stencil kit. You can form a trellis pattern with the stencils, which makes a small space seem larger and a square room more dynamic.

Wall coverings

Wall coverings (paper, vinyl, grass cloth, and so on) are minor miracles of color, pattern, and texture. Don't overlook other materials for covering walls. Favorite textiles (patterned and textured) include brocade, velvet, linen, silks, chintz, calico, and burlap. Metallic threads woven into textiles add glitter and glamour. Leathers (including suede) are used for walls and doors.

Here are tips for decorating your living room with wall coverings:

- » Marry Traditional colors and patterns (such as stripes) with Traditional furniture.
- » Try a small amount of hand-screened wall covering as an accent, if your budget doesn't allow for an entire room done in this expensive material. Here are other budget-saver ideas:
 - Consider adding the wall covering as a border just above a *wainscot* (paneling below a chair-rail molding).
 - Create small panels of paper and border them with decorative wood moldings.
 - Cover just one short wall.
- » Pair textured wall coverings with Contemporary furnishings — the more distinctive the contrast in texture, the more modern the look.

Paneling

Today's wood paneling is a far cry from the older luan paneling that made itself at home all across the country. Paneling adds a certain richness to walls. And, although initial costs make paneling more expensive than paint or wall coverings, in the long run, it proves a savvy solution for repairing damaged walls. You can nail paneling directly to the studs, saving time and labor. If you haven't seen new paneling, take a look at paneling at The Home Depot or Lowe's.



TIP

If your living room has that old luan paneling, don't despair — paint it! We painted ours white, giving a fresh country cottage look to a once deadly dull room. Ask your paint dealer to show you the right products to use.

Dealing with your ceilings

If you can't ignore the ceiling, decorate it. Not like the Sistine Chapel but perhaps with a color. Contrast high ceilings but don't contrast low ceilings with the wall. Painting the high water-stained ceiling in a yellow-walled Florida room a sky blue disguised the damage and created a light-hearted vacation mood. If the ceiling is unobtrusive (out of sight, out of mind), you can save time, money, and effort by painting it white to reflect maximum light. If you want any ceiling to stand out, take a look at Chapter 14 for a variety of options for creating a sensational living room ceiling.

Adding drama to the floor

With floors, the options are numerous (see Chapter 13). Choose warm, friendly, practical floorings and floor coverings, such as wood, carpeting, or rugs, for casual living areas. For dressy rooms, choose cooler, more distant-looking materials such as marble or ceramic tile (and add decorative rugs if you like). For rooms that fall somewhere between casual and dressy, there are lots of options in wood, carpeting, ceramic tile, and resilient and laminate floorings. It's not unusual to combine different floorings and floor coverings for dramatic impact. But this requires greater caution — you want to avoid a hodgepodge look.



TIP

Here are some guidelines for drama in your living room floor:

- » Consider a new material, such as bamboo, leather, mosaic, or stone.
- » Let a gentle background and upholstery play second fiddle to an extravagant rug.
- » Traditional style calls for a color scheme of dark floor, medium walls, and light ceiling.

- » A Contemporary interior turns the table on Traditional color distribution with the floor as the lightest color in the room.
- » It's safe to match the scale of a patterned floor to that of the room size. In a small room, choose a small pattern; in a big room, select a big pattern.
- » Quiet a marble, ceramic tile, or wood floor with a well-padded room-size rug. (Condos require special underlayment when installing hard-surface flooring.)



WARNING

If you combine two different flooring materials (carpeting and wood, for example), make sure that the finished surfaces are the same height, in order to prevent someone from tripping or stubbing a toe.

Doing up the windows

Decide early on whether the window treatment is to play a starring or supporting role. Certain windows — such as picture and bay windows — are architecturally significant and need very little dressing up for their roles as focal points. Keep them simple — the better to show them off. Plain double-hung windows need a thoughtful window treatment (beautiful drapery and handsome curtain rod, interesting shutters, attractive blinds, or perhaps combinations of these elements) to make them scene stealers. See Chapter 16 for details.

Start your planning by determining whether your window treatment will carry on the particular style of the room (Traditional or Contemporary) or offer an eclectic contrast.

Traditional window treatment designs abound. Decorating magazines offer a feast of window treatments that you're free to copy. Pattern books of beautiful designs of *over-draperies* (a draw drapery over sheer curtains, window blinds, valances, and cornices) are plentiful. Drapery shops can create custom designs (or perhaps you're talented and you can make your own). Many shops offer both custom and ready-made window treatments.

Contemporary treatments run the gamut from no treatment to simple blinds or shades to draw draperies in an interesting textured fabric. Romantic Contemporary — a relatively new style — uses colored sheer fabrics as curtains in rooms full of clean-lined furniture.



TIP

Go eclectic by using a Contemporary treatment in a Traditional room or vice versa. Dramatic juxtapositions create tremendous excitement.

Handling Accessories

Accessories add the final touch. Consider them a way to further express your personal style. Chapters 25 and 26 offer more information on art and accessories, so check them out.



TIP

Here are some general tips for adding accessories to your living room:

- » **Accessorize according to the season, helping yourself to budding blossoms or turning leaves.** Pussy willow and forsythia branches that signal springtime, fresh-from-the-garden floral bouquets that say summer, and a mound of pumpkins on a great plank table that speak fall all tell your decorating secret: You love your home.
- » **Add accents to break up large expanses of overbearing solid color, such as big sofas and large upholstered chairs.** Include pillows, an afghan, or a quilt for relief and for physical and emotional comfort — a big part of what home is about.
- » **Add flowers (but not fruit) to a formal living room.** Keep edibles in the den, great room, kitchen, or dining room.
- » **Avoid lavish obtrusive tablescaping.** Accessories should delight but not get in your way. Put accessories on an easily moved tray if you're going to use the table.
- » **Choose unbreakable accessories for living rooms where children are welcome.** Put china and crystal items in a china cabinet. Children's toys that are safe for the living room may also be very decorative but need a place for tucking away when not in play.
- » **Edit your accessory displays.** No matter how much you love a particular vase or painting, if it doesn't add to the room, subtract it. (If in doubt, take it out!)
- » **Hang an oil portrait of an ancestor or yourself over the mantel in your dressy living room.** Hallways, dens and bedrooms are great places for casual photographs of family and friends.
- » **Hang artwork at eye level — not too high, not too low, but the spot where the eye naturally lands.** In that way, it can be enjoyed with the least effort.
- » **Lamps flanking a sofa may not be identical but should be similar in size, shape, and color.** Make sure shades are the same or similar and that light bulbs are the same cool or warm color.



TIP

- » **Less is more.** A few emphatic accessories make the right decorating statement in dressy Traditional and Contemporary living rooms.
- » **Place a stack of colorful books beneath the base of a lamp that's too short.** This technique looks great, works well, and is a budget stretcher.
- » **Place mini-lamps in secretaries, china closets, and étagères where they work their magic.**
- » **Stow clutter.** Even in a Country-style room, too much stuff can be unnerving.
- » **Steer clear of loading a sofa down with pillows.** Leave space for sitting by making extra pillows available in a handy basket. Vary pillow sizes and shapes for comfort's sake.
- » **Use varying kinds of lamps for different lighting needs.** Include torchiers for style and soft, indirect light.

IN THIS CHAPTER

- » Figuring out your dining room's style
- » Decorating your formal dining area for special occasions
- » Dining all through the house
- » Decorating quickly with on-hand accessories

Chapter 23

Designing for Dining

Dining almost anywhere in and out of the house — kitchen, family room, porch, and patio — is the American lifestyle. What transforms eating into dining is the mood made by that décor.

In this chapter, you figure out how many people a dining table seats (comfortably). You decide on an overall — personal — style for your dressed-up dining room. You see how to make other rooms work for pleasant dining. You get tips on making small spaces more dining friendly. And finally, you figure out how to decorate your dining room with accessories you already have on hand.

Preparing a Comfortable Table

A dining room calls for a large and handsome table and comfortable chairs. The finer the furnishings, the more formal the room — and the less frequently it's used, perhaps only for special events and holidays.

You want family and friends to admire your beautifully set table and to be comfortably seated for enjoyable meals. To see how much space is needed for each

place setting (and how many guests your table can seat comfortably), take a look at the following guidelines:

- » **Plan a minimum of 24 inches for each place setting.** If you have the room, 30 inches is ideal and much more comfortable.
- » **Make sure the table doesn't have a low *apron* (the wood panel below the tabletop).** A low apron may prevent your guests from crossing their legs. If you have a low apron, find chairs that seat at a comfortable height.
- » **If you use a sofa (or bench) for seating at a long table, choose one with a high enough seat.** Add casters to sofa legs if you need to raise the seat height.
- » **Be sure that the chairs arms are low enough to slide beneath, and not bump into, the table.** Too-low tables can be raised with casters or devices that elevate (which are available at home stores).
- » **Provide at least 24 inches of space behind each chair when someone is sitting in it.** This is the minimum space needed for people to pass by when serving or leaving the table.



REMEMBER

You're better off setting up an additional table in another room than crowding a dining room with a too-big table and too much furniture.

If you're in the market for a new dining table, or you're just not sure how many people the table you have can comfortably seat, check out Table 23-1 for the low-down on table shapes, sizes, and seating capacity.

TABLE 23-1 Table Sizes and Seating Capacities

Shape	Dimensions	Seating Capacity
Round	36-inch diameter	Four for drinks, two for dining
Round	40-inch diameter	Four
Round	56-inch diameter	Eight
Square	38-inch square	Four
Rectangular	60 x 36 inches	Six
Rectangular	72 x 36 inches	Six to eight
Rectangular	84 x 36 inches	Six to eight
Rectangular	96 x 48 inches	Eight to ten
Rectangular	132 x 48 inches	Twelve

Putting Style on Your Menu

Decorating for dining differs from room to room. The kitchen (whether eating at table or a counter or bar) is decidedly informal, but it can still be elegant. A dining room may be formal or informal (and still dressy). So, how do you decorate to suit your lifestyle?

When the dining room serves only for dining, it's fairly easy to decorate. (If it will also function as a library or study, there are more things to consider later.)



TIP

Stick with your living room's style to create unity and serenity in the adjoining dining room. To create mild excitement, keep the same style, but use a lighter tint or darker shade of the living room wall color in the dining room. Or use the same wall color in the dining room and switch the accent color.

Decide how formal or informal you want the room to be before you begin to make decorating choices — floor covering, upholstery and drapery fabrics, and more. If the room is to be very dressy and used only on special occasions, go ahead and decorate with fragile fabrics and materials. If the room is to be dressy but used frequently — perhaps daily for dinner — choose materials that will hold up to wear and tear.

After determining the mood (dramatic, serene, glamorous) and usage (daily, occasionally, only during holidays) of your dining room, consider these decorating suggestions:

» **Formal:** Formality is an attitude, not one style — there are options.

- Opt for dressy eclecticism. In Figure 23-1, the sophisticated style mixes fine furnishings from various periods and warms up walls with a lively wallpaper.
- Be a purist — keep furniture, walls, tableware, and linens all the same style or period.
- Go Contemporary with glass and chrome furniture, a light background, and plenty of dazzle.

» **Informal:** An informal but dressy dining room balances a relaxed mood and perhaps finer manners than are called for in the kitchen, as shown in Figure 23-2.

- **Holiday away charm:** Give a room all the appeal of a weekend at your favorite resort. An old but charming wood table with drawers for handy storage of flatware and napkins can set a note of relaxed elegance. Finely handwoven place mats, hand-painted dinnerware, handblown glassware, and interesting flatware (knives, forks, and spoons) all add up to a rich but welcoming atmosphere. Think polo, not rodeo, for this look.

FIGURE 23-1:
Bright colors
lend a festive air
to a dressy (but
not too formal)
dining area.



Photograph courtesy of Mark Candelaria, AIA (www.candelariadesign.com); photograph by Dino Tonn

FIGURE 23-2:
Casual dining at a
kitchen bar can
be quick, easy,
and elegant.



Photograph courtesy of Mark Candelaria, AIA (www.candelariadesign.com); photograph by Dino Tonn

- **Dressed-up country:** American Country, Provence and Tuscany styles make room for individuality and informality. Dress up a round Country-style table with a to-the-floor tablecloth. Give period chairs a more relaxed look by painting them white or a light color and cushions in a cotton toile fabric. Light up the room with an extravagant rustic chandelier that adds to the festive mood.
- **Relaxed Contemporary elegance:** Contemporary floor plans and furniture are inherently elegant with their curated “less is more” designs. To keep contemporary dining rooms seem informal, set the table with simple dinnerware (no gold rims for plates and glassware). Use place mats instead of a fine tablecloth. And instead of roses, choose some exotic plant for the centerpiece.

Creating the Formal Dining Room

Formal dining rooms make even ordinary menus seem extraordinary. Even a fancy dining room can double as an elegant library or study (and with a hideaway armoire for the PC, perhaps a home office) between dining occasions. Whether or not your formal dining room does double-duty, decorate it with comfort, movement, color, texture, pattern, furniture, china and glassware, linens, and storage in mind. The following sections show you each piece of the puzzle.

Comfort

In many people’s minds, formality translates to discomfort. But you and your family *can* be comfortable. Think about what makes you comfortable, and incorporate those things into your design. Take a look at the following suggestions for comfort:



TIP

- » **Control the room’s sound.** The noise level should be neither deathly quiet nor too loud. Fabrics (including rugs, tablecloths, and draperies) absorb sound. If your dining room is wired for music, so much the better, because soft music is a delightful sound for guests to hear as they enter the room.
- » **Find the right lighting level.** Make lighting bright enough that diners can see what they’re eating, but keep light levels low enough for a relaxed mood. For a lighting level that’s just right, control overhead lights with a dimmer switch or use indirect lighting. (For lighting ideas, see Chapter 17.) Keep candles above or below, but never directly at, eye level and surround them with hurricane globes to prevent wild flickering.

» **Opt for comfortable seating.** Padded chair seats fill the bill. A fully upholstered (seat and back) chair is most expensive. Upholstered slip seats, which unscrew for quick and easy recovering, are less costly. A thick, tie-on cushion is least expensive. For peace of mind, select a stainproof, wipe-clean fabric or material for chair covers. (Fabrics can be treated with stain guards by your retailer or with a home-use stain repellent.) Removable slipcovers that can be laundered or sent to the cleaners are also a great idea, even in a formal room.

Movement

Your family and guests need to be able to move in and out of their chairs without asking permission, bumping into each other, or knocking over their water glasses and pulling the tablecloth with them (only magicians can pull that one off!). So leave 1½ to 2 feet between chairs, and add casters to the bottoms of chairs for easier movement.

Traffic should flow around the table and seated guests, so leave at least 2 feet for passage of one person and up to 3 or 4 feet for people who are serving from heavy trays. If your dining room is small and leaves little or no room for a china cabinet or additional furniture, face up to it. Position those items in a hallway or living room.

Color, texture, and pattern

Have you ever noticed that fast-food restaurants use red and orange in their decorating schemes, while fancier uptown restaurants tend toward soothing neutrals — off-white, beige, and taupe? Color affects mood and behavior. Warm colors stimulate people, and cool colors calm them.

So, if you want to people to eat excitedly, use a warm color, up to and including red, on the walls. Your own strategy can call for striking a balance — a cool background spiked with warm (and hot!) accent colors, or vice versa. (For more information on color, see Chapter 5.)

Heighten stimulating effects with more sheen in paint (with high gloss), wallpapers (with metallics), fabrics (with silks, metallics, or light-reflecting glazed surfaces), or mirrors. Tone down and slow down the emotional climate with matte (dull) finished surfaces.



REMEMBER

The finer and shinier the texture, the dressier the room; the duller, rougher, and coarser the texture, the more rustic, informal, and casual the room.

Pattern also affects formality. Tiny floral and geometric patterns tend to be folksy and informal; whereas larger, more graceful, and symmetrically balanced patterns are more formal.



TIP

Choose the patterns for your dining room based on the degree of formality you want to achieve. Realize that complex patterns offer the viewer plenty to see and think about, so they're very entertaining, which may be important when meals are long and your company isn't all that exciting!

Furniture

For the most part, the furniture you need in a dining room is basic — a table and chairs. Your first obligation is to make sure your guests have adequate room. After your guests are comfortable, you can consider adding a china cabinet, which is an impressive element in a dining room but can be housed nearby if necessary.

A china cabinet with a lighted, mirrored back and glass shelves adds a sense of depth, sparkle, and glamour — and it also provides practical storage. Buffets and servers add much-needed surface for stacking plates and foods to be served in courses.

If your dining room also serves as your library, handsome tall bookcases should also have decoratively arranged and accented (accessorized) shelves. If you have a desk in a handsome rich wood that matches the other furniture, a clean top can serve as another staging area for china, crystal, and dessert.



WARNING

Don't crowd a formal dining room. If your dining room is too small for a china cabinet, table, chairs, and adequate room to walk around the room, you can compensate beautifully with a narrow, wall-hung shelf (which doubles as a buffet) with a large mirror above.

Take a look at the following furniture strategies for small dining rooms:

- » **Build in your buffet.** Custom furniture can be smaller than ready-made pieces, so it can conserve space in a smaller room.
- » **Place your china cabinet in a nearby space accessible from the dining room.** Most furniture is designed for flexibility, so it works in more than one room. Putting the cabinet in a hallway or living room nearby where ample room is available can prevent you from having to crowd a small space.
- » **Select chairs with see-through backs.** These chairs seem to take up less space than chairs with solid backs.

- » **Substitute smaller pieces for a standard china cabinet.** A 10-x-48-inch glass shelf on gold or silver standards above a narrow buffet, a serving piece, or a 30-inch-high bookcase all work wonders. Put plates on easels atop glass shelves to store and display china at the same time.
- » **Use no high furniture; stick to pieces with a low profile.** The lower the furniture is, the more airy and spacious the room will look.
- » **Cover one or more walls in a landscape mural, or hang a large landscape.**

China and glassware

Tradition dictated that all china, glassware, and silverware match. (It wasn't that people weren't creative, but having matching "sets" indicated wealth and status.) Today a wealth of creativity is prized. Hostesses have fun mixing and matching china patterns to create unique settings and memorable meals.

Take a look at the following suggestions for setting an exciting, mixed-up, but far from crazy dining room table:

- » **Choose highly contrasting silverware.** Contrast plain and ornate handles, or silver-handled knives and forks with black-handled spoons. Use gold-tone dessert spoons if the rest of your silverware is silver. (If you use gold-tone spoons, use some china or glassware with gold trim.)
- » **Look to creative centerpieces to underscore a particular mood for each meal.** Make sure your guests can see over and around them.
- » **Match solid-color accent pieces to a color in your china pattern.** If you use solid white accent pieces, pick a china pattern with a white (not beige or ivory) background.
- » **Mix a geometric china pattern with a floral pattern in the same colors.** The contrast of forms looks very of-the-moment.
- » **Mix a large-scale floral pattern with a tiny, all-over china pattern.** The interplay of big and small looks dynamic.
- » **Mix glassware — contrasting colors, clear and frosted, plain and fancy stems, and decorated and plain glassware.** When you add colored glassware to the setting, choose a color that matches or relates to a color in your china, or add a centerpiece of the same color as your glassware for a sense of unity.
- » **Vary your table coverings whenever possible.** Your family and friends will have a sense of newness and surprise when they dine.

Linens

We call all tablecloths, runners, place mats, and napkins *linens* — even though they may be made of cotton, wool, or some synthetic fiber. Old or antique linens were actually made of linen. They required a lot of care, so they fell into disuse. Beautifully crafted antique linens are now collectibles.



TIP

Linen tablecloths are still available and are very elegant. But save labor (especially if it's your own) by choosing crease-resistant, wash-and-wear types. Cotton lace is also an easy-care cloth for a formal table. Embroidered and cutwork tablecloths (in which patterns are created by cutting away some of the fabric and finishing cut edges with embroidery) are beautiful choices for formal tables.

Monograms add a sense of elegance to the formal table. Usually, the tablecloth isn't monogrammed, but the napkins are. (And if your chairs wear slipcovers, consider monogramming the slipcover backs!)

A tablecloth for a formal dinner should drop 12 to 15 inches on each side of the table (to cover the apron and add a sense of grace). Using a protective underpad (available wherever you buy tablecloths) saves the tabletop from damage from heat and spills and makes the tablecloth hang better.

Wide runners and place mats are considered acceptable alternatives to tablecloths for all but the most strictly formal occasions. They're especially appropriate when the tabletop itself is particularly beautiful. Runners and place mats may be quilted for extra protection. Use them with heavier, chunky crystal, because delicate and fragile crystal may not be so steady on this uneven surface.

Storage

To store dining items efficiently, put them near the place of food preparation or near the table itself. Older houses have pantries for storing china, crystal, silverware, and linens. In modern houses that have no pantries and kitchens with minimal storage cabinets, these items are usually stored in a china cabinet, buffet, or small dresser in the dining room.

If necessary, consider commandeering a nearby closet and fitting it with shelves for storing dining room items. Line the shelves in felt and keep a stack of felt or other plate dividers to prevent chips.



TIP

Don't crowd crystal, especially stemware. Assuming that your butler is on permanent leave, polish silver *hollowware* (metal tableware such as sugar bowls that accompany dishware on the table), and then store properly with flannel bags or silver cloth that is designed to store silver. Store the silver out of sight (otherwise,

this tack looks tacky). Wash and dry sterling silver flatware by hand and handle it with care so you don't bang, dent, or scratch it.

We hang ironed tablecloths on padded hangers, which keeps them from wrinkling as they do when piled in drawers. Cloth napkins get ironed and stacked on a closet shelf in matching groups.

Making the Most of Casual Eating Spaces

Breakfast rooms are more likely to be breakfast nooks in most homes. Built-in banquette seating (like a window seat) is a space saver in these small spaces. Keep a microwave oven handy for extra slices of toast. A rolling cart makes carrying plates back to the kitchen easy. The nook is part the kitchen (and perhaps great room) so décor is decided, except perhaps for accessories, like wall art.

Islands, countertops and bars need an overhang of at least 15 inches for comfortable snacking or grabbing a cup of coffee. If you're designing an island or bar, or getting a new countertop, add 15 to 18 inches to the width in the design stage.

Serving Up Food and Beverages in Other Spaces

Americans have new eating habits, according to trend watchers. Builders are accommodating this trend by creating multiple dining areas throughout the house. Consider these eat-in areas standard for new homes:

- » Two casual eating places in the kitchen — a breakfast or snack bar and a table for four or more
- » A full and formal dining room
- » A butler's pantry for preparing and serving food, wine, and beverages
- » A place for serving cocktails in the living room
- » A full bar and kitchenette for the den
- » A minibar and table for two in the master bedroom
- » A California kitchen (full grilling and chilling facilities) on decks, patios, and poolside
- » A minikitchen and bistro table and chairs for the guestroom

As for your house, the trick is to know what makes you and your family happy and then plan for it. The following sections provide suggestions.

Living room

What makes dining in a living room work? A wipe-clean tabletop (like glass or marble), well-padded chairs, and a rolling cart. The cart transports everything you need to set the table (place mats, napkins, silverware, glassware, and dinnerware).

It stays handily in place until its return with all the paraphernalia — in one easy and efficient trip — to the kitchen for cleaning and storing. Plug in a lamp with up-lighting on either side of the table for a pleasant, well-lighted setting. Keep tapers and matches in a handy end-table drawer.

Hallway

Some homes have kitchens too small to eat in, but they may have a wide hallway area just outside the kitchen. Maybe a glass door offers a spectacular outdoor view and lets in radiant light. In this situation, place a narrow table — with drop leaves that can be pulled out at mealtime and lowered during high-traffic times — against the wall.

As for seating, flank the table with chairs that can be pulled into place at mealtime, use folding chairs that can be stored out of the way in a nearby closet, or tuck stools beneath the tabletop.

If you need extra light, plug one or more wall-hung lights or a skinny table lamp into a nearby wall socket. (Soft up-light is pleasant for dining. For more lighting tips, see Chapter 16.)

Media room, dens, and game rooms

Eating in front of the TV set is so popular that certain furniture manufacturers have created high-low tables that can be raised for dining and let down again to coffee table height. Sitting on most sofas (which are low) and dining at a coffee table forces you to bend over, straining your back.

If you plan to eat on the sofa, you're better off choosing a higher sofa and substituting a tea table for a coffee table. Large individual trays (that allow each person

to carry their laden plate to the table) are a must at our house. They double as place mats. Don't forget TV trays — you can find them in all price ranges and styles, complete with holding racks.

If you eat in other rooms of the house, such as the bedroom, garden room, or screened-in porch, and have no permanent table there, keep collapsible TV trays and folding chairs handy. Store them near where you most often use them.

Also, in the kitchen, keep a rolling cart stocked with napkins, salt and pepper shakers, and other items necessary for meals. Then you can add serving plates, glassware, and foodstuffs to the cart and roll it where they're needed. If you have no electric lighting in the space (for example, on a porch or deck), use candles with protective hurricane shades. Store those, and matches, on your rolling cart.

Outdoor dining

Got a patio or porch? Transforming these spaces into dining areas takes a tiny bit of effort for a big payoff. Whether it's barbecue or fancy dining, big parties or small get-togethers, you can create a memorable dining experience like in Figure 23-3 with these tips:

- » **Add underfoot flair with an outdoor rug.** These weatherproof floor coverings define your dining space and add a pop of color to bare concrete or decking.
- » **Be unbreakable — at least when it comes to dishes and glasses.** Lots of stylish options for tableware are available. Coordinating sets are a step up from disposables. Look for dishwasher-safe options.
- » **Extend your use of outdoor space from pre-spring to late fall with patio heaters.** Patio heaters run on propane and can cost as little as \$70 and as much as \$700, but options in a midrange of \$150 and up abound online.
- » **Firepits can add natural glow and, depending on their design, can double as cocktail tables.**
- » **Have it made in the shade with outdoor umbrellas, patio covers, and awnings.** Patio covers and awnings are a bit of an investment, but outdoor umbrellas are relatively inexpensive. They also add a lot of style.
- » **Light up the scene with landscape lighting, outdoor table lamps, standing lamps, and festoons of stringed lights.** Consider chandeliers, paper lanterns, and pendent lights if you have a covered space or pergola.

- » **Locate dining/entertaining areas near an access point to your kitchen.** Make sure there are clear traffic pathways. Avoid placing seating and tables too close to a grill for safety.
- » **Place lounge seating and cocktail tables in groupings.** Having seating for cocktail hour or after-dinner conversation will add luxury and comfort.
- » **Put out fans and ceiling fans to keep people cool and hold bugs at bay.** Bugs can't fly into wind. Fans and ceiling fans need to be outdoor-proof so look for ones rated for outdoor use.
- » **Select the perfect dining set based on number of diners, preferred table shapes and sizes, and level of comfort needed.** All the guidelines for dining rooms apply, along with a need for withstanding outdoor extremes.



FIGURE 23-3:
Painted church
pews draw guests
to the porch for
lunch at designer
John Lyle's
country house.

*Photograph courtesy of John Lyle (www.johnlyledesign.com);
photograph by Mark Roskams*

Adding a Dash of Dining Magic

Planning a meal for a dozen guests and you don't have a big enough tablecloth? Don't even have a table that *seats* 12? Don't panic! Consider the following suggestions:

- » **Bring into play a couple of sawhorses and a 4-x-6-foot sheet of sturdy ¾-inch plywood as a table for 10 or more guests.** Pad the plywood with a thick blanket and cover it with a cloth (king-size sheets work well) to hide the legs. Add a generous centerpiece, and you and the table are all set.
- » **Try a wash-and-wear flat sheet as an impromptu tablecloth.** Usually even an expensive sheet is much less expensive than a similarly sized tablecloth, so we buy designer sheets at discount stores for this very purpose. (Does it matter that they're often irregulars? Not a bit.) And napkins can be in coordinating solids, which makes buying them on sale easier.
- » **Find charming, patterned, standard pillowcases to make instant slipcovers for ladder-back or folding side chairs.** Gather the top corners, and tie each corner with a grosgrain ribbon. Fold hems inside and scrunch under the bottom of the pillowcase where it bunches at the seat.
- » **Knot a big tablecloth's corners for a casual meal at a smaller table.** For a fancy table, tie a beautiful ribbon around each corner, gathering them up until the cloth fits.
- » **Use one or more round, glass-topped, or mesh outdoor tables for indoor dining.** Disguise them by padding the top with a blanket or quilt and adding a round tablecloth that drops to the floor. Use a king-size sheet and tuck the corners underneath so the cloth looks round, if you don't have time or want to cut and hem it. The table coverings don't have to be identical. Make each quite different from the other, and then offer guests their choice. It's fun for everyone.
- » **Create a candelabra by grouping your candlesticks (mix and match 'em) on top of a raised cake stand.** If you're placing the candlesticks on untempered glass, protect the glass from the candle heat with a coaster or other heat-absorbing surface.

A friend of ours collects colored candlesticks. Used together, and with different colored candles for each, this candle grouping is a favorite lighting and centerpiece solution.

FAVORITE TRADITIONAL DINING CHAIR STYLES

If you're not sure about what chair style to select for your dining room, consider these classic styles that promise to endure forever.

- **Queen Anne:** The gentle curves and moderate scale of this style of furniture make it neither too masculine nor too feminine. Depending on the wood, finish, and upholstery fabrics, this style adapts with equal ease to very formal, casual dressy, or comfortable Country moods. It's a perennial favorite because it's suitably scaled for most homes.
- **Chippendale:** This 18th Century or Traditional style with its squared-off shoulders, heavier scale, and usually dark finish is both masculine and formal. It, too, is an enduring classic and a favorite style for generously scaled but not overly large rooms.
- **Duncan Phyfe:** The distinctive saber leg, delicate scale, refined embellishment, and discreet wood finish make the Duncan Phyfe a welcome addition to fine dining rooms and especially to small-scale rooms.
- **Empire (called *Biedermeier* in Germany):** This style of furniture is heavy, dark, deeply carved, lavishly decorated, and certain to bring out the emperor in would-be Napoleons. If your dining room is large and impressive, this furniture style is designed to reign.
- **Louis XV:** This gracious French style is seen in all the best places — in many guises, ranging from gilt-edged formality to antique painted finishes that seem just short of frivolous. In fruitwood finishes and relaxed fabrics, this style is casual enough for a den or even a breakfast room.
- **Louis XVI:** More slender, delicate, and refined, the Louis XVI style is more feminine than the other Louis and more formal — which isn't to say that you can't paint it a passionate purple, cover it in a wild and crazy Gucci print, and have tons of fun. This style promises to live forever, especially because you can always refinish that purple!
- **Victorian:** Once scorned by purists, Victorian furniture has proven its popularity with those who love its slightly exaggerated curves and feminine wiles. Often covered in gorgeous velvets, Victorian chairs also look wonderful in beautiful floral chintzes and ornate gimps and other fanciful trims. Most often seen in wood finishes, Victorian chairs take very kindly to faux and other painted finishes.
- **Wing chairs:** Use them at the ends of tables are also favorites — just make sure the seats aren't too low and you have ample space for them.

- » Making bonus areas livable and workable
- » Decorating attics, basements, and more

Chapter **24**

Transforming Bonus Spaces

In the race for space, turning your underused attics, basements, porches, patios, and laundries into usable rooms is smart. Perhaps your basement walls are unfinished, your attic has no flooring, and your porch, patio, or laundry room desperately needs some finishing touches.

In this chapter, we show you that transforming attics, basements, patios, and porches into real live-in spaces requires relatively little time, energy, and money. We also tell you how to give your laundry room new uses, including turning it into a game room (which is happening in more and more households these days). Whether you're remodeling or tackling a finishing project, this chapter helps you prepare and decorate your bonus spaces.

Annexing Attics

Early Americans often used attics as bedrooms, but we usually use them just for storage. Because the structure (walls, floor, ceiling) exists, they're relatively inexpensive to claim for living space.

You usually need to remodel an unfinished attic before you can begin decorating. After you've done this step, let the decorating begin! Follow these guidelines:

- » **Keep it light.** Unless you add dormers and/or skylights, attics are dark spaces. Add ample artificial lighting, preferably set-in-ceiling, high-hat-type fixtures, which don't encroach on headroom. Use light, bright, cheerful colors for walls and furnishings, such as lemon yellow, apricot, or peach.
- » **Consider the angles.** Attics are full of interesting (and confusing) angles. Create unity to cut the confusion by keeping walls and floors nearly the same light color. If you're using a patterned wall covering for its old-fashioned charm, keep the background light and the pattern small to medium in scale and relatively open — like a trellis. A trellis creates a three-dimensional effect that makes any room seem spacious.
- » **Raise those low ceilings.** Attics look smaller than they are because about 50 percent of the space has less than 7½ feet of headroom. To compensate, stick to a light color scheme for floors and walls. Use a wall covering in a vertical stripe with a light background for the knee wall area (the short wall between the floor and a peaked ceiling; see Figure 24-1). Use a coordinating, small, open-ground geometric or floral pattern wall covering for the ceiling.



TIP

FIGURE 24-1:
A vertical stripe with a light background works well in the area between the floor and the peaked ceiling of an attic.

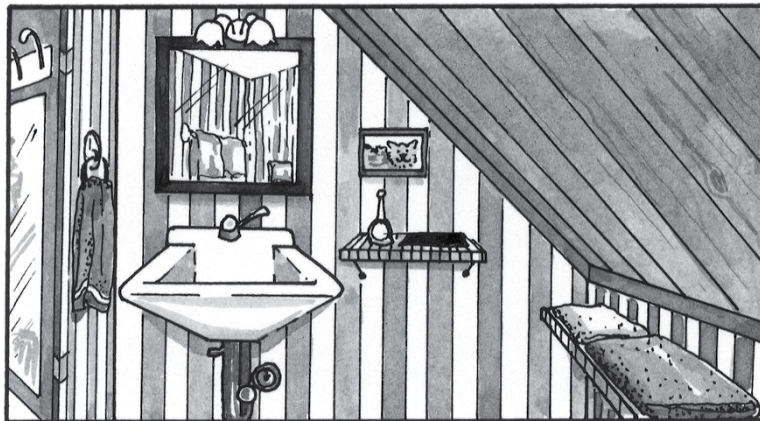


Illustration by Elizabeth Kurtzman

- » **Make the most of among-the-trees views.** Leave attic windows, which are usually small, uncovered. If you need the privacy, install a simple blind, but avoid draperies (they take up visual space). If you feel the need for the softness draperies create, keep the contrast between the drapery and walls minimal, to retain a sense of spaciousness.

- » **Let the flooring do double duty.** Let it act as a sound absorber. A thick low-pile carpet with a generously thick pad does the trick and makes the attic seem plush. Pass up noisy, hard-surface floorings, and avoid space-eating, deep-pile shaggy rugs.
- » **Choose furniture that makes the space seem bigger.** No big, bulky furniture for attics. Keep all furniture low and horizontal, so it seems to blend into the low knee wall and not encroach on the ceiling height (see Figure 24-2). If you plan to use your attic as a bedroom, consider dispensing with the bed frame and just placing the box springs directly on the floor. Or if the bedroom is for children or young guests, use a futon or camp cot as a bed.

FIGURE 24-2:
Low furniture
makes an attic
space seem
bigger.



Illustration by Elizabeth Kurtzman

Beautifying Basements

Basements are often the first areas that most homeowners consider using for additional living space — especially if ceilings are a comfortable 8 feet high.

Before you begin remodeling, consider the function(s) your basement will perform. If you want it to serve as a home office, you need wiring for lights, computers, and phones (see Chapter 20). If a playroom for the kids is the goal, you want warm, comfortable, easily cleaned flooring. If you and your family pursue arts and crafts, you'll require a slop sink, shelves, worktable, and stools. Other possibilities include a laundry room (wiring and plumbing are critical), a guest bedroom (convenience and comfort are crucial), or a bedroom for a teenager (consider privacy needs).

After you decide how to use your basement, and you tackle the heavy labor of remodeling, you can have fun decorating. Consider these basics:



TIP

» **Create overhead beauty.** Make the ceiling disappear by keeping it light (but not necessarily a strong-contrast white). Consider using a pale tint of your wall color. If you must use white, try an off-white that has a tinge of color. Avoid busy patterns on ceiling tiles or other ceiling materials. The simpler, the better — and the higher the ceiling appears.

» **Color it sunny.** Counteract basement gloom by selecting light, sunny colors from the warm side of the color wheel. If color seems too noisy for this naturally quiet space, select light, rich neutrals. And yes, if you've covered walls in inexpensive dark wood paneling as an expediency, you can paint it. Ask your paint dealer for the right primer.

» **Select the right flooring.** Ceramic tile is a good choice for basement floors and may or may not be expensive, depending on your choice of tiles. Synthetic tile flooring is a popular, relatively inexpensive choice because small amounts of moisture won't harm the material. If your floor is moisture-proof and you provide an appropriate subfloor, you may want carpet. Choose a synthetic fiber that can withstand moisture.



WARNING

Real wood flooring won't work in basements because of the excess moisture. For the look without the problems, consider an engineered hardwood (for more information, go to www.hardwoodinfo.com) or wood-look laminate flooring. Ask your floor-covering dealer whether the material you're installing will perform under damp conditions.

Painting a cement basement floor is an inexpensive option. Check with your paint dealer about the right primer and paint. Some drawbacks are that painted cement doesn't wear as well as other surfaces, absorbs no sound, doesn't cushion your legs and feet, won't offer any visual softening, and will have to be repainted from time to time. Our advice: Paint only little-used basement floor areas.

Use the same flooring throughout your basement, even if there are different rooms. The continuity increases the apparent size of the space.

A dehumidifier takes out the dampness that is characteristic of many basements. You'll have less mold and mildew.



TIP

» **Furnish it your way.** With proper ventilation and humidity control, upholstery is right at home. If you're not using synthetic tile on the floor (which allows wicking away of moisture), you may want to use moisture-protection pads for furniture as a precaution. Otherwise, anything goes. Choose a style, period, or look that suits you.



REMEMBER

» **Light your world.** Provide ample ceiling lighting. Install warm rather than cool bulbs (see Chapter 16), because warm bulbs tend to make the space more appealing. Your lighting also eliminates the need for table and floor lamps that eat up space physically and visually. If you want extra lighting, choose wall sconces or pendant lamps.

Mirrors bounce light back and tend to make spaces seem both brighter and bigger, so use them as wall coverings or accessories in basements.

» **Choose wall materials.** Before you finish basement walls, make sure they're moisture-proof. Then you may finish them with popular and inexpensive wood paneling or wallboard. Paneling requires a one-step installation, so you can apply it quickly. Wallboard needs spackling and either painting or wall covering, so this process is more time-consuming and a little more expensive than paneling. Paneling's vertical lines tend to make ceilings seem higher, but wallboard is more versatile because it can be either painted or papered.

» **Treat your windows.** Basement windows need privacy. Thin-slat *inside-mount* blinds that fit inside the window frame (called the *reveal*) look tidy, as opposed to *outside-mount* blinds suspended awkwardly on a long wall. Long draperies for short, small basement windows can look awkward. If you want the softening effect of fabric, consider swags. They may sound old-fashioned, but they look smart in up-to-date fabrics.

Crafting Craft Spaces

Storage needs, the number-one issue in the design of space for crafts, depends on the craft. Sewing, model plane building, painting, restoring china or old books — each will inform you about the kind and amount of storage needed. Shelving may be bookcases — configurable so they can be rearranged when desired. Kitchen cabinets (wall-hung and base) would offer shelves, cabinets, and a working countertop.

Built-ins are an efficient use of space — and an affordable option for do-it-yourselfers. Look at metal storage units intended for garage workshops. Graduated-size drawers offer many choices for storing a variety of tools and materials. Some designs are vertical (a designer friend has one in his country house dining room). Horizontal units have drawers and a worktop. Big casters make it easy to roll these units anywhere they're needed. For more ideas, check out the “Providing storage” section, later in this chapter.

Choose the work surface that works for your craft. An old kitchen table is great for laying out lengths of fabric. A small drop-leaf table works in tight spaces. Cover tops that need protection with a clear shower curtain snugged underneath the top with double-faced tape or butterfly clips.

New vinyl floorings make choosing beautiful moppable flooring easy. If maintenance isn't a problem, consider other options.

If you don't want reflected color to influence your craft, choose light neutrals for walls, floors, and ceiling. And choose cool (not warm) light bulbs for ambient and task lamps. You may need to add electrical outlets — extension cords are not ideal.

If you're going to sit for hours working on your craft, look at ergonomic office chairs — and try one out.

Enlivening the Laundry

The new trend for busy people who want to spend more time with their families is to put the washer and dryer in a brand-new room, which Whirlpool (www.whirlpool.com) calls the “family studio.” The family studio is a multifunction space where several people can work together or separately to accomplish one or more tasks, beginning with the laundry. The larger the family studio, the more activities can take place there. But even a smaller laundry space — especially one fitted with sinks — can do double duty as a craft center, potting room, hobby space, or exercise room.



TIP

No matter the size, every laundry room is a more cheerful work environment if you decorate it to suit your personal style. Following are some tips for decorating your laundry, first for its starring role as a fabric care center and then (if you have enough room) as a craft center, game room, and more.

Planning for action

When laying out your laundry room, decide what functions will take place there — laundry, arts and crafts, plant potting, and so on. List the equipment you need for each, such as:

- » Washer(s) and dryer(s) — front- or top-loading (If you're short on space, consider a stacked washer and dryer or get a stacking kit for a full-size washer and dryer.)
- » Sink for hand washing

- » Bins for sorting dirty clothes
- » Table for folding dried clothing
- » Chair(s) or stool(s)
- » Drying cabinet that allows you to hang-dry wash-and-wear items
- » Clothes vitalizing system that removes wrinkles and odors in 30 minutes
- » Storage for soaps, stain-treatment sprays, and other fabric-cleaning supplies
- » Ironing board and iron

After you've made your list, draw your floor plan, noting openings such as windows and doorways. Take a good look at existing wiring and plumbing. Do you need more outlets and in different locations? Do you need a dedicated circuit for the washer and dryer? Is there an electrical outlet for other equipment, such as exercise machines and a stereo and TV? Talk with an electrician about adding any wiring you need. What about plumbing? Is a waste line handy, or does a plumber need to create new hookups for your washer, dryer, and sink?

If your laundry is in the basement, consider hiring a carpenter to create a laundry chute. Maybe you have room (through a closet floor, for example) for a dumb waiter, which can haul up clean clothing.

After you determine these basics, organize your space to provide activity areas for doing laundry functions (sorting the wash, folding clean clothes, and ironing), as well as potting plants, making arts and crafts, and so on. Don't have enough space for everything you want? Top-loading washers and dryers (as opposed to front-loading) are space savers, as are stacking units for storage. Perhaps storage cabinets that double as work surfaces are in order.

Installing floors

Choose flooring that is impervious to water and that you can easily wipe clean. Ceramic tile may be a good solution — especially for the sink area. Hard rubber flooring works well, as well as vinyl flooring engineered to work in damp areas. If small children are going to play in this space, a cushy area rug provides warmth and comfort. Make sure it's washable, so you can rid it of watercolors and other spillables.

Painting concrete is a decent choice, as long as the basement is dry. As a quick fix, we painted the concrete floor in Liz Hart McMillan's East Hampton, New York, house a bold tropical aqua — just the right antidote for long, cold, and very messy winters and a nice foil for sunny yellow beadboard walls. For comfort and to protect the floor, we placed thick washable bath mats in front of the washer and sink.

Choosing wall surfaces

A laundry room's wall materials should be easy to clean, impervious to moisture, and sound absorbing. Ceramic tile is easy to clean but it's probably not a good choice because sound reverberates (no matter how quiet the laundry equipment). Wallpaper doesn't adhere very well in moist conditions.

Painted sheetrock or wallboard is a good, practical, and relatively inexpensive wall covering and can be wiped clean. Wood paneling works well, but if your room is below grade, you must make sure the walls are insulated against moisture and that the paneling is covered in washable paint. Our East Hampton client used beaded board paneling in her laundry because she liked its old-fashioned country character. We painted it a sunny banana yellow — washable, of course.

Color for your walls can be anything you like, but if your laundry room is in your basement, it will benefit from bright, cheerful colors. Consider watermelon red, coral, peach, or a yummy mango.

Accessorizing

What about a wall-hung collection of wicker laundry baskets? Or a collection of old clothes pins on display — perhaps on clotheslines strung across the ceiling? Or photographs (especially black and white or sepia) of laundry drying on a clothesline in the great outdoors? You may choose to escape the laundry theme altogether and opt for some other theme that takes your mind off the chores at hand.

Sizing up seating

Plan on placing some chairs, just as you would if this were your den. Rocking chairs with removable, washable pads work well. Wicker chairs with cushions are also a casual, comfortable choice.

Providing storage

Whether you opt for armoires, bins, bookcases, cabinets, gym lockers, or open wire or wooden shelving, an assortment of storage is a must. An armoire or free-standing bookshelf is great for storing children's toys and arts and crafts supplies. Open wire shelves are good for holding stacked, freshly dried laundry. Open wood shelves can hold laundry supplies. Rolling bins that can be stashed beneath a large table used for clothes folding can hold just about anything you need.

Making Meditation Areas

People are discovering that adding a brief meditation practice to their daily lives can promote well-being and increased focus. Meditation is a skill, and beginners can start with simple breathing exercises. Breathing is a science-backed way to manage stress. Hundreds of breathing techniques exist, and research shows that using the proper breathing technique can lower stress, amp up productivity, reduce anxiety, or put you to sleep. Just five minutes a day can improve sleep, boost mood, and keep worries in check.

To create a dedicated meditation area in your home, consider these tips:



» **Accessorize with useful props.** Floor cushions and pillows can help support the body during your practice. You also may want specialized meditation benches, stools, kneeling chairs, and other supports for backs and knees.

» **Amplify aroma.** Use incense sticks, candles, and essential oil dispensers to impart therapeutic fragrance.

Science shows that some scents like frankincense activate areas in the brain that decrease anxiety or depression. Simply watching flames or plumes of incense can provide a meditational focus, too.

» **Anchor your space with a rug.** Signal to your brain that you've carved out a special niche, even if it's a corner of a room, by using a rug. Your mat can be placed over the rug for your practice.

» **Bring in natural elements of water.** Small (or large) water fountains can create a mini-indoor waterfall. The sound is relaxing (and may cover distracting traffic sounds with its acoustic perfume).

» **Go green with greenery.** Plants improve air quality and give us something de-stressing to look at. Putting your plants in decorative pots makes them accessories that add style to your space.

» **Incorporate objects of serenity.** Affirmation stones, beads, bells, chimes, and crystals can be placed aesthetically on shelves or tables. These elements promote meditational focus while also adding a sense of serenity to the environment.

Perking Up Porches, Patios, and Decks

Making your porch a relaxing living space is easy. If it's visible from the living room, decorate the porch in the living room style for continuity. Otherwise, suit yourself. For our porch off the kitchen, but visible from the street, curtaining the

porch with wash-and-wear sheets was a quick, easy, and cheap way to gain privacy. They also shielded the porch from weather so we could use it into the fall.

To make the curtains, we opened both ends of the 4-inch cuff of king-size Missoni sheets and gathered them on expansion rods. The rods were tucked between hefty porch posts salvaged from an old ship. On sunny days, tiebacks on cup hooks screwed into the posts held the curtains open. After a rain, we let the curtains flop in the breeze to dry. Pillowcases over bed pillows cushioned thrift-shop wicker chairs spray-painted white. Hot pink paper lanterns were festive. The postman asked who was getting married!



REMEMBER

Weather drastically and rapidly affects porch and patio furnishings, so buy outdoor furniture. Outdoor summertime furniture can withstand moisture and extremes of temperature. Don't use indoor furniture — it rusts, rots, and fades if left outside. Most wood furniture needs protection (teak is a well-known exception). Wicker needs the protection of a porch roof from summer sun and must be stored indoors in winter. Metal furniture can withstand light summer rains but needs protection from winter weather in most areas. If in doubt, ask your furniture salesman.



TIP

Always check with your community and homeowner's associations to find out if ordinances or bylaws restrict or prohibit porch and patio decorations. Secure your furniture (if necessary) to prevent loss to theft or storms.

When decorating your porch or patio, keep these tips in mind:

» **Accessories:** Potted plants — especially those that bloom — are a natural outdoor accessory. Pile a bunch into a child's red wagon (see Figure 24-3), antique wicker pram, or old wooden boxes. Hang lanterns (they look like paper but are made of weather-resistant plastic) surrounding electric light bulbs or votive candles. Painted wooden fruit and vegetables, dried or painted gourds, and marble fruits and vegetables are also festive for this outdoor environment.

Other fun and even practical ideas include brightly painted watering cans, wooden duck decoys, equipment for outdoors games (such as croquet or badminton), and colorful plastic children's toys in brightly colored plastic crates. Just about anything that says "outdoors" and looks pretty goes well on your porch or patio.

» **Flooring:** Stone floors are a natural for the outdoors and usually need only an occasional hosing down to look great. Slate is a popular patio and porch choice, laid with grout or with moss or grass. Wooden floors on porches benefit from a good coat of paint (and perhaps a couple of coats of polyurethane).

FIGURE 24-3:
Potted plants in a
child's wagon are
a great accessory
for a porch
or patio.



Illustration by Elizabeth Kurtzman



WARNING

Choose a color that's compatible with the color of your house's exterior walls — maybe a color that matches the existing shutters; black or forest or hunter green may be dramatic in New England or the Midwest. In Southern climes, turquoise, navy, cobalt, aqua, Bristol, or some other terrific blue adds pizzazz.

Use rag rugs for special events on patios but bring them in when the party's over. Consider adding a sisal (fiber) rug, a washable cotton area rug, or a painted floor cloth on protected porches. Area rugs create an unexpected but desirable indoor ambiance for outdoor areas.

Don't expect a wool area rug to stand up to outdoor use. It will mold and stain, and moths will eat it. Instead, use tough, rubber-backed synthetics that look like Traditional rug designs.

» **Furniture for seating:** Some communities have ordinances against upholstered "indoor" type sofas on front porches. But you don't want to put indoor upholstery on the porch anyway, because sun, rain, and dust would damage it. Instead, use wicker (see Figure 24-4), teak, aluminum, wrought iron, or any material that can stand up to the elements.

For comfort, choose cushions covered in special outdoor fabric. It's washable and stuffed with fiberfill designed to stand up to the weather. The new versions of outdoor cushions are plush and comfy, adding a certain luxe look to porch, patio, terrace, or balcony.

Arrange seating just as you would indoors, in close conversational proximity. Add tables for snacks, beverages, and books and magazines. If your children play here, provide a toy box for storage. Consider a hammock for extra seating and a great place for a nap.

If your porch or patio is large enough, provide groups of furniture for various functions, such as conversation, games, and dining.



TIP

FIGURE 24-4:
Wicker furniture
is especially well
suited for
sheltered
outdoor seating.



Illustration by Elizabeth Kurtzman

» **Lighting:** Porches have protective roofs and come equipped with overhead lights or wall sconces for evening use. Make sure your porch and/or patio is adequately wired. You'll need to plug in floor and table lamps (choose those engineered for outdoor use, with heavy-gauge cords, shatterproof bulbs, and shades made of outdoor fabrics).

White (or colored) patio lights add festivity. Don't forget additional lighting for patios that have outdoor wall lights and are surrounded with landscaping lights. Glass-globed hurricane lanterns fitted with candles and citronella torches serve as temporary lighting sources (and are a great way to keep skeeters away).

» **Shelter:** On porches with large openings between porch posts, hinged shutters can provide privacy and weather protection as needed. You might also consider curtains, like the ones we described earlier. Custom awnings will provide some sun protection but no privacy.

Shelter for open patios and terraces may come in the form of umbrella-covered tables (where strong wind is not a problem). A friend stretched a large flat panel of *duck fabric* (sometimes called *canvas* and commonly used for sails, casual upholstery, and hammocks), which was tied at the corners with lightweight rope, between trees and above the patio to shelter it and her picnic table from the sun. A painter's drop cloth would work, as would a big tarp. (Untie them when it rains.)

» **Walls:** Porch and patio walls are usually the same color as your house's exterior walls to keep continuity. But you can decorate them with hanging planters, ceramic tiles or plates, painted wooden plaques, a mirror, a collection of decorative birdhouses, and other appropriate items that neither sunshine nor rain will damage. Just be sure wall-hung items won't blow off in a strong wind.

Styling Out the She Shed

She sheds burst onto the scene in 2015, got massive exposure in a humorous insurance commercial in 2018 (the she shed burned to the ground), and continue to grow in popularity. They provide places to do crafts, read a book, work on projects, and simply get away from distractions inside the house.

She sheds must function well, too. It's important to have great wiring, lighting, heating/air conditioning, and all the furnishings you'll need for your activities.

As far as style goes, the more over the top, the better. You can find Pinterest postings of literally hundreds of styles of she sheds. You decorated your home with friends in mind — color scheme, furniture style, and traditional rooms meet their expectations. Now express your purely personal style.

There's no right or wrong here — no good, better, or best. No one is going to judge. You're free to choose: Bohemian? Big City Glam? Old West? Romantic? Victorian to the *n*th? High-Tech? Whatever — go for it! Paint the wall any color you like — or all four walls a different color (and the ceiling, and floor, too).

Maybe you want to paint the floors Jackson Pollock style — dripped to the max in a wild medley of colors. (Pat advised a young friend unhappy with his New York City loft's ugly concrete floor to do that. A week later he called, thrilled with his beautiful *new* floor! Want to experiment? Why not! Ask your paint store guru for advice on the best paint for your floor.

In cold weather, warm up your colorful floor with an area rug in a solid color. You can layer rugs, use small area rugs to define zones, or go with a wall-to-wall carpet.

As for furniture, anything goes. Paint thrift-shop furniture in your own Shabby Chic style. Or just choose furniture that expresses your personal taste. One designer friend loves Country French design. Her she shed is furnished with French furniture finds from thrift shops, estate sales, and eBay.

Another designer is interested in works by regional artisans, some of whom are happy to craft items that she designs. The finished interior has an artisan-painted birch-tree mural and unique chandelier. Her shed — in a wooded area near her home, with a view of the stream beside it — is a place of meditation for this busy woman.



TIP

Want your own she shed? You can buy them online as kits, construct them yourself (if you're handy), or have one built by a local custom shed builder.



Putting on the Final Touches

IN THIS PART . . .

Arrange art, including paintings, photography, and sculptures, to make a personal statement.

Find the right accessories and art to finish out your decor.

- » Acquiring art you want and need
- » Knowing what to do (and not to do) with your art
- » Putting art in its place on walls and more

Chapter 25

Arranging Art Artistically

Art does more than furnish empty wall space. Art *works* by adding color, line, texture, and mood. Art entertains, informs, and alters perceptions of spatial depth. A landscape pierces the space, encouraging the eye to travel beyond the wall to an imaginary world outside. Using art in this way relieves a sense of confinement in a small room. Instantly add an element of style — an ancestor portrait perfects a timeless style, a groovy poster adds to grunge look — by hanging artwork on a blank wall.

Art can be wall-hung artworks, commonly called *pictures*. Other types of art, like sculptures, figurines, and pottery, are decorative accessories; you can learn more about them in Chapter 26. In this chapter, find out how to select art, where to place your art, and how to mix art with other furnishings.

Finding Art

Art is anywhere and everywhere. For best results, bring along snapshots or sample boards and floor plans to help you decide whether a particular piece of artwork fits in with your room. And don't be afraid to let gallery owners, artists, and others know you're looking for art that works well with your room — they just may have the perfect piece in the storeroom.

What is art? Framed (or unframed) art has a decorative function as an accessory. Art is like icing on a cake — it creates a sweet experience. Art has no functional

purpose like that of a chair, table, or bed — but that’s okay because art does what it’s meant to do: Complete your decorating scheme. Art works hand-in-glove with a room’s plan to add wow to your personal style.

Art is commonly thought of as pictures on paper, canvas, or boards that can be framed or unframed. Art comes in three categories:

- » **Fine art:** Sometimes called “high art,” fine art is a unique, aesthetically pleasing creation and intellectual content. Investment-quality original works of art are available in a variety of media, usually sold by a gallery or reputable dealer, and they may grow in value. Expect to pay hundreds, thousands, or even millions of dollars for fine art.
- » **Decorative art:** Pretty and statement making, decorative art can be found in furniture stores, retail stores, thrift stores, and online at reasonable prices. Some art in this category can be unique or reproductions.
- » **Fun art:** Anything framed from posters to kids’ art is art because it pleases the eye.

Art comes in various media — oil, acrylic, watercolor, and the graphics (lithographs, etchings, and woodblock or woodcut prints). Some wall-hung art is really 3-D metal sculpture that can add pizzazz. No one medium is better than the other — it’s a matter of preference. Deciding on the right art takes judgment. Knowing where to find art takes time to shop or browse. Finally, knowing how to use art to its best advantage requires a good sense of style.

Knowing where to buy fine art

Fine art has evolved over the decades. More types of art and more sources of art than ever before are accessible and affordable. The good news is that there are more online ways to acquire graphic prints and paintings. It has never been easier to discover an up-and-coming artist or invest in blue-chip pieces.

Expect to pay more for original one-of-a-kind pieces than for limited-edition prints. Originals are considered investments, expected to increase in value over time. If the work is by a recognized artist, you should expect to pay a significant amount — although not every piece by a name artist is investment-quality.

Here are two important points to remember when considering fine art:

- » **Buy from a reputable source.** Make sure that you get what you pay for by dealing with an established gallery. This is especially important if you’re buying the work of a new and news-making artist — the next Picasso. If you’re not

sure which gallery to deal with, ask museum curators and art professors to recommend galleries.

» **Develop an eye for quality.** You can sharpen this skill by participating in museum tours, seminars, gallery visits, and art history and media classes, as well as by reading magazines and books. Read art journals and magazines to find the names of the artists they represent and the value of these artists' work.



TIP



TIP

If it's "the look for less" that you want, you can achieve the basic look with reproductions of original pieces without breaking the bank!

Visit artists' studios when you have the opportunity. Talk with artists at openings. Check their biographies, which tell the names of celebrity clients, museums where their work is hung, awards they've won, and so on.

Picking up decorative art

Decorative art doesn't challenge your brain cells; it should brighten your day! Certain oils, acrylics, and watercolors are merely decorative (not investments). Reproductions (mass produced) of original oils, acrylics, and watercolors, graphic media, and your personal photographs make great decorative art to complete your home decor.

Decorative originals

Decorative oils, acrylics, and watercolors created by teams of artists, each of whom paints only a part of the total picture, are original in that they aren't reproductions. But because they're mass-produced for their decorative value, interior designers facetiously call them "art by the yard." This purely decorative art isn't intended to contribute to art history; it's meant to hang beautifully over your sofa.

In addition to galleries, artists' studios, and designer showrooms, retail art shops and furniture stores are the easiest places to find decorative art. You can sometimes find pieces in consignment shops, flea markets, and antique shops, and at auctions and estate sales. (We've found some of our favorite pieces at thrift shops.) As for knowing whether you're paying the right price for a particular piece, *you be the judge.* (The frame may be worth the price of the entire piece.) Don't forget your area's colleges and schools, where students and teachers may sell their art.



TIP

Not every piece by a great artist is great art. You may like a lesser, purely decorative piece *and* get a kick out of owning something by a big-name artist!

MORE THAN ONE ORIGINAL?

Pieces of original graphic art — woodblocks or woodcuts, etchings, lithographs, and photographs — are called *multiple originals* because more than one exists. They're still considered originals because each one is created by the artist's hand.

The artist usually signs and numbers these multiples with sequential numbers to form a limited edition. The first number designates which one of the series it is, the second number (after the slash) indicates the total number of the edition. No one piece in an edition is considered more valuable than any other. Usually, a small edition with only a limited number of prints (say 100 total pieces) is more valuable than a large or unlimited edition of as many as 1,000 pieces.

Another exception to the “fine art is unique” rule is investment-quality photography, which has gained acceptance as fine and collectible art. Original photographs may or may not be released in signed and numbered limited editions. (See the “Photography style” sidebar in this chapter.)

Decorative reproductions

Reproductions are copies of original fine art that can look amazingly like the real thing — right down to the brush or knife stroke. Traditionally, they weren't considered in the best of taste and were labeled “fake.” But tastes change. Today, fake is exalted as *faux*, and faux may be the way to go.



TIP

Here are four acceptable reasons for decorating with reproductions:

- » **Availability:** Reproductions are readily available. You can't turn around in many home stores without bumping into reproduction art.
- » **Cheap insurance:** Household insurance rates are much lower for reproductions than they are for the real thing.
- » **Cost:** They're affordable.
- » **Tasteful subject matter:** Some musical posters and pop-culture art have stood the test of time.

PHOTOGRAPHY STYLE

Photography, a fine art form, makes for striking displays. Either large-scale photographs or groupings of smaller photographs can create drama. Groupings can re-create the look of a gallery wall. Whether the photography is from a gallery or a professional photographer/artist, you'll want to frame the work properly, if it isn't already framed. Frame shops carry many styles, and it's a matter of picking a style that works for the photograph and your interior. As a do-it-yourselfer, you can pick up sets of gallery wall frames in either the same size or mix of sizes. If you're using your own personal photography, these frame bundles make creating a gallery wall a no-brainer. Whether full-color, *sepia* (brown tint), or black-and-white, photographs can add personal style to your decor.

BUYING DO'S AND DON'TS

Buy what you love and can afford — regardless of the type of art. Don't hesitate to hang different types of art together. The only time you shouldn't mix fine, decorative, and fun art is when it doesn't look good together. Let your eye be the judge.

Here are four tried-and-true tips for selecting art:

- **Buy art that speaks to you.** Well, not literally, but something that makes you laugh, sing, feel nostalgic, or jump for joy.
- **Hang art that grabs your attention.** Buy art that you enjoy looking at, boasts colors that look smashing with your furnishings, and works with the decorative style of your room.
- **Never use art that bores you.** Art should evoke a mood, but boredom isn't the one you want! With so much art available, all it takes is a little looking around until you find the right piece. So, what's the rush?
- **Don't pit your art against your furniture.** Avoid hanging fabulous artwork over furniture if the art fights it. A great piece of art and your sofa both deserve the right setting.

Having fun with art

Fun art (which may not be art in the strictest definition of the word) is just about anything you want to hang on your walls. Fun photos by amateur photographers, including family members, make excellent decorations — especially when enlarged dramatically — and they add real sentiment that truly personalizes a

room. You can also frame theater tickets, a child's artwork, your old ballet shoes, the front-door key to your first house, or rusty horseshoes. Military veterans frame their medals, certificates, and awards. Framers love to rise to the challenge of showcasing these unusual objects. Often, the framing itself is artful!

In addition to “fun art” with its anything-goes novelty, consider hanging your own oils, watercolors, pencil sketches, photographs, and textile art! Qualities thought of as dead giveaways to amateur art are often endearing and have great appeal to collectors. Think of folk art by Grandma Moses.

Placing Art in the Right Relationship

Where should you hang that collection of inherited oil paintings of racehorses or that almost-ugly seascape that your favorite aunt loved and gifted you with? What about the painting of oranges that your granddaughter did in a high school art class? What art goes with what, and why?

Picking up on a picture's colors

When you hang a large, important picture above the sofa, it should relate to the sofa color or contrast beautifully with it. Repeat the dominant colors of the painting in other accessories throughout the room. Start with throw pillows on the sofa.

Considering basic conventions

Strong social conventions do exist. Here are some no-no's:

- » **Don't hang nude paintings in your living room or dining room.** Yes, we know they hang in the Louvre, but hang yours in private spaces such as bedrooms and bathrooms.
- » **Don't hang a fruit or vegetable still life in the bedroom or living room.** They're more appropriate for the dining room or kitchen.
- » **Don't hang family photos in the living room where a formal oil portrait is appropriate.** Hang casual photos in the den, hallway, or bedroom.
- » **Never hang religious art in the bathroom.** Save it for the bedroom or a hallway.
- » **Don't hang small landscapes near large still life fruits or vegetables paintings.** The disparate scales of the two can make both look awkward.

- » **Don't hang barnyard scenes in a formal living room.** They're fair game in the den.
- » **Don't hang blood-and-guts war scenes in the dining room.**



TIP

Flowers, landscapes, and seascapes are welcome just about anywhere.

Pleasing the eye of the beholder

Floral subjects are usually considered feminine; boats and seascapes, masculine; and whimsical themes, childish. Feel free to take advantage of this traditional thinking to make quick, easy, and uncontroversial choices.

If you have an educated eye, you may want to go beyond traditional thinking. For example, when a large floral is geometric rather than realistic, it may be just the ticket for a tailored interior. When in doubt, experiment.



TIP

Ask if the shop will allow you to return and exchange art that doesn't work out. If they do, keep your receipt and return the art by the store's deadline in like-new condition.

Finding homes for your art

Look at how professionals — curators, interior designers, and others — hang various kinds of art. Visit museums, galleries, showcase houses, and furniture and department stores with room settings that include art. Browsing through decorating magazines is an inexpensive and time-saving alternative.

Back to the future

A good starting point when finding the proper setting for your art is to look at what's worked in the past. For example, each of the various graphic media — woodcuts, etchings, and lithographs — have characteristics that are compatible with certain decorating periods and styles:

- » Woodcuts have a rustic, naive quality that fits with Renaissance, Gothic, and Early American décor (see Chapter 8). They make a nice counterpoint to Contemporary furnishings (see Chapter 9).
- » Etchings are composed of finely drawn lines that are elegant and get along well in dressy rooms.
- » Lithographs are more painterly and colorful and take on a wide range of looks and styles, ranging from romantically Impressionistic to boldly Modern.

Up-to-the-minute looks

Black-and-white photographs look fabulous with just about any period or style of furniture. They breathe fresh air into period rooms and sing the same tune as Contemporary style. Depending on the subject matter, black-and-white prints are at home in any room.

Eclectic mixes

Contemporary interiors stress individual approaches to very personal rooms where just about anything goes. Three eclectic ideas follow. (Note that the first two approaches are the yin and yang of eclecticism. The third involves an artful mix.)

- » Create interest by contrasting a large, important, period-looking oil (think ancestor portrait) artwork with a crisp, modern background.
- » Pit boldly colored, extremely geometric subjects against stark white walls in rooms furnished with formal period furniture.
- » Create *art walls*, which mix a diverse group of works in interiors where all other furnishings are subdued and play second fiddle to the art. Be aware that diverse artworks will challenge your ability to create a necessary sense of unity.

None of these three techniques just throws a lot of disparate stuff together — that's not eclectic style, it's a hodgepodge. These personal statements require a great sense of aesthetic balance and a good deal of wit. Have fun experimenting and develop your own eclectic style.

Artful Backgrounds

A little fresh paint can help give your art a boost. Notice that the '70s and '80s trendy art-gallery look, with light bleached floors and pure white walls, is giving way to rooms with more Traditional color schemes. Leading decorating magazines show a renewed interest in strongly colored walls, including dark greens, deep rusts, intense corals, passionate reds, and sunflower yellows.



TIP

If you're painting a wall to show off your art collection, choose a color that looks best with the dominant color in your collection. Test your choice by painting a portion of a wall (or poster board) and propping several large pieces against it.

For greatest visibility when you're hanging art against a busy background, think *contrast*. Choose a frame that contrasts strongly with the background. It can be a substantial size or dramatic color (black, for example). If your art has a mat, be sure that it contrasts with the wall. Also consider the subject: Pink roses against pink rose wallpaper will blend in and simply disappear.

The Art of Art Placement

Hang art where the eye *expects* to see something (and feels a distinct sense of something missing when nothing is there). The most obvious gaps often occur on the wall area above a piece of furniture. The art must relate to the furniture in size and scale. Consider these guidelines:

- » Art should be no wider than the furniture below it. If the art is narrower, it should be at least half the length of the furniture.
- » If a major piece of art is too narrow for the chosen spot, flank it with smaller pieces of framed or three-dimensional art that fill the space and satisfy the eye.
- » The bottom of the art should be close enough to relate to the furniture but allow for breathing space (generally about 8 to 10 inches). If, for any reason, you need to leave as much as a foot between the furniture and bottom of the art, you can close the obvious gap with a floral arrangement or other space-filling device.



TIP

Consider adding art to unexpected places, too. Art over a door or window pulls the eye up and makes the door or window look taller and more interesting. Art hung in the blank space between a windowsill and floor gets noticed. A tiny piece of art hung below the lampshade on a bedside table is a nice last thing to see as you turn off your lights.

Rearrange and move your art, hanging it in different places around the house from time to time. You'll discover new things in each of the pieces after they're hung in a different light, at a different angle (higher or lower than before), and with different furnishings.

Grouping Artwork

Grouping art is a great way to decorate walls against which no furniture is placed. Usually, these walls are adjacent to a walkway, as in a hallway. You can adopt an “all-over” approach and hang groupings higher and lower (floor-to-ceiling) than expected, in order to cover more wall area.

Do's and don'ts of group displays

What you hang reflects your point of view. Make sure that you effectively showcase whatever you decide to hang. Consider these tips for hanging groups of artwork:

- » **Think of art as reflecting your passion for beauty.** Collections can give you great pleasure and satisfaction. To paraphrase Matisse, at the end of the day, you should be able to look at your paintings and be refreshed by their beauty.
- » **Master the mix.** Frame a Contemporary piece in an ornate period-style frame. Hang similarly themed art from different periods together, as long as colors and scales relate.
- » **Mix-and-match frame styles and art styles if you're hanging several small- and medium-sized pieces of art.** Variety is the energizing spice of life in these groups.
- » **Remember that size counts.** Smaller items look best clustered in a group. Larger pieces look best when singled out. Usually, place smaller artwork to the sides or above medium pieces.
- » **Stair-step your paintings only in stairwells, not on the walls.** *Stair-stepping* refers to hanging one painting several inches lower than the other, and it makes sense only on a staircase.
- » **Think outside the box.** Groupings don't have to be symmetrical (look exactly alike on each side). For example, you can hang a grouping of art on one side of a shelf or tabletop and balance the other side with tall vases or sculptures.

Timeless symmetry

Any grouping of art that can be halved down the middle and look the same on each side is symmetrical. *Absolute symmetry* occurs when exactly the same objects are used on each side of the room (see Figure 25-1). *Relative symmetry* also creates a mirrored effect, but the objects on one side of the room aren't identical to the ones on the other side of the room (see Figure 25-2).

FIGURE 25-1: Absolute symmetry, the most formal arrangement, creates mirror images using identical items on each side of a grouping.

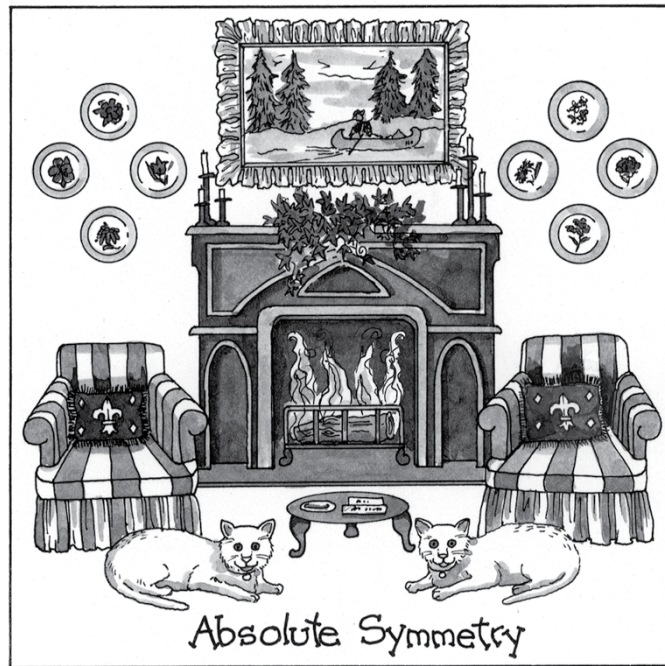


Illustration by Elizabeth Kurtzman

FIGURE 25-2: Relative symmetry strives to create a mirror image effect using objects that are similar but not identical.

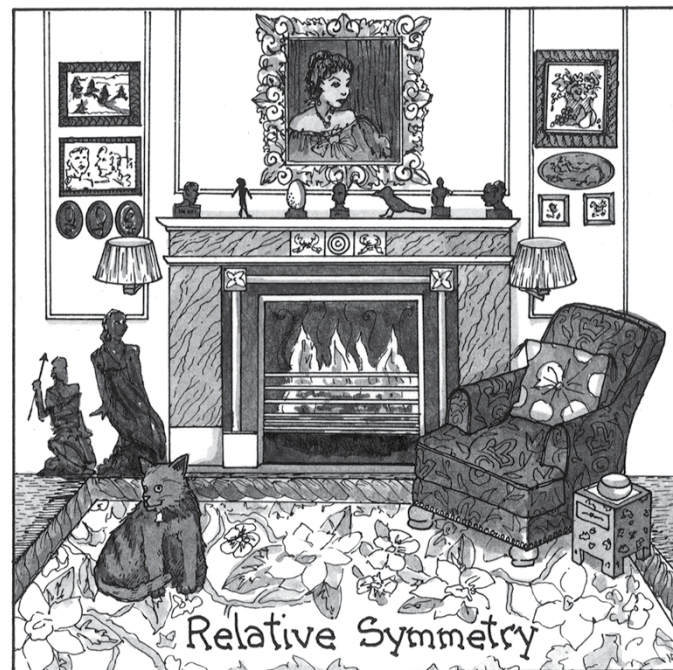


Illustration by Elizabeth Kurtzman

An art grouping composed of similarly sized frames hung equidistantly from each other is an example of a symmetrical arrangement. Traditional room settings use this approach by hanging a dozen botanical prints in rows and columns. Do symmetrical groupings when all the pictures are framed and matted identically. The effect is formal, serene, and Traditional. Consider using this classic arrangement to add stability to a Contemporary setting.

Contemporary asymmetry

An art grouping of variously sized framed pieces hung in a straight line, in rectangles, in triangles, or in other similar patterns, but placed so that it creates an optically balanced arrangement, is *asymmetrical*. Asymmetrical arrangements achieve a sense of balance by carefully grouping items of unequal size, shape, and color (see Figure 25-3).

FIGURE 25-3:
In this asymmetrical arrangement, the dark rectangular mirror and the dark ball beneath it equal the impressive visual weight of a large dark pot.

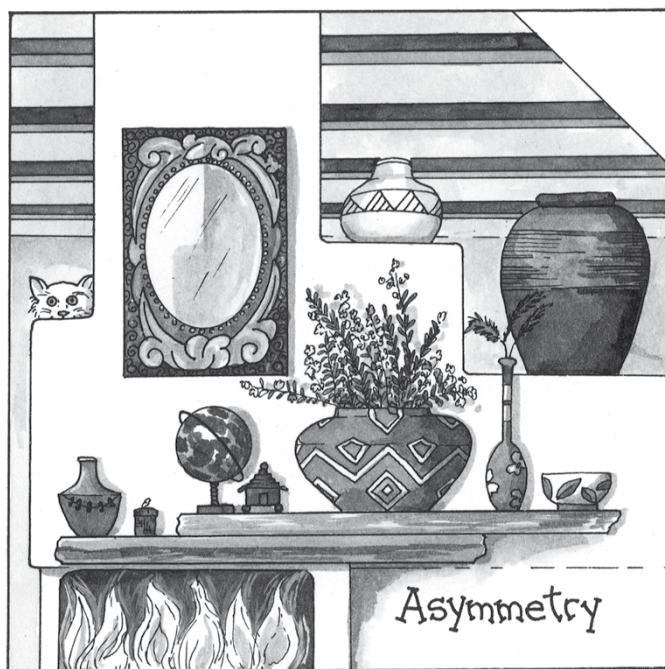


Illustration by Elizabeth Kurtzman

When you use numerous paintings of various sizes and shapes, composition is trickier to achieve. Usually, hanging the paintings to create similar-sized masses in close proximity makes them work like a mural. Plan your groupings to form a square or a rectangle by keeping tops (or bottoms) of frames level to create unity

and order. Another option is to create a circular or oval arrangement. These groupings are dynamic, casual, and Contemporary, the exact opposite of Traditional compositions.



REMEMBER

The eye finds a grouping of an odd number of paintings (which provides no logical place to settle on and keeps the eye moving) more dynamic than a grouping of an even number of paintings, which the eye reads as a single stable entity.

Great grouping techniques

If you follow these steps, you can create a perfect grouping every time, without making frustrating mistakes:

1. **Measure the wall space that you want to fill.**
2. **Outline that exact size on your floor using masking tape.**
3. **Arrange the art on the floor within the given area.**

Doing so enables you to move pieces around until you arrive at the optimum arrangement.

4. **After you're pleased with the grouping, measure and hang.**

Be prepared for surprises. You may need to shift pieces from spot to spot, because unusual factors can affect the sense of balance that you're striving for:

- » **Generally, heavier pieces should go below lighter pieces.** A large delicate oil may seem lighter than a smaller, darker, more rustic woodcut. Size alone doesn't make a picture seem heavier — color does. Ultimately, hone your eye, because you'll have to use your own judgment.
- » **Leave 2 or more inches of breathing space around each piece.** Pieces hung too close together lose any sense of individuality; those hung too far apart don't look like a group.



TIP

Arrange groupings of art on the floor first. After you're satisfied with the arrangement, hang the first framed piece at eye level (not too high, not too low) and at the center of your wall area. Some gallery experts say the artwork's center should be about 57 to 60 inches from the floor. The 57-inch rule is a standard at many museums, but keep in mind occupants' heights and the proportions of your room (hang art lower in rooms with 8-foot ceilings than those with higher ceilings) when deciding on the optimum visual center for your art arrangement. About 60 inches works for most spaces, according to some professional art hangers. After you pick your sweet spot in terms of inches from the floor, stick to it.

HOW TO HANG

Use the correct hooks designed to hold the weight of the art you're hanging. Using two hooks for larger works helps keep them hanging straight. And make sure that the hook you're using is the right one for your type of walls (plaster or plasterboard).

If you're nailing or screwing a hook into a plaster wall, put a crisscross of adhesive tape on the wall to keep the plaster in place and then drive the nail or screw through the tape. If you're hanging art on a slanted wall such as a *dormer* (slanted) ceiling, attach the artwork at the top and bottom of the frame. If you're creating a precise rectangular or square grouping, secure the pieces at the bottom, too, so that none become crooked.

For added excitement, add mirrors, sconces, and brackets with sculpture to your art grouping. Add textural interest with tapestries and quilted, woven, or embroidered wall hangings.

Displaying in Off-the-Wall Ways

You don't have to hang art to display it. The following list gives you our favorite alternatives:

- » Intersperse paintings with books in a bookshelf.
- » Lean your art on an easel. Easels, large and small, have never gone out of style.
- » Place an array of framed miniatures inside a glass-topped display table, coffee table, or end table, or atop a big round table.
- » Set a large picture on the floor (unless you have small children or pets). Set a small picture on the mantel, place a bunch of pictures atop a bookshelf, or just lean them against the wall.
- » Prop up small artwork, including photographs, on wooden shelves. This allows you to quickly and easily change your display.

- » Stretching your decorating budget
- » Creating surprise with accessories
- » Arranging accessories stylishly
- » Discovering beauty in unexpected places

Chapter 26

Accessorizing with Flair

Accessories are small furnishings — pictures, throw pillows, sculptures, and vases — that add colorful accents and create spots of interest. Often personal treasures, they underscore personal style and give a room a lived-in look. Accessories earn their keep as accents; they don't have to serve a useful function.

This chapter shows how to accessorize to show off your personal style. You see where to find the right pieces, how to breathe new life into items you already have, and how to use tried-and-true secrets of professionals. We cover several categories of accessories, giving you tips and tricks for making the most of your finishing touches.

Hunting for Accessories

Many confident decorators find beauty in unusual objects: collections of kitchen utensils, bits and pieces of rusty metals, and old toasters displayed as accessories. If you have one of those oddball collections — metal shears, leatherworking tools, barbed wire, and so on — create a stylish display.

You don't have to look far to find things that add color and interest to any room. A client hung baskets on S-hooks from a ceiling-hung iron chain in her kitchen, handy for her trips to the garden for fresh veggies. A Florida client hung a large

quilt above a loveseat in her entry hall; she arranged her collection of birdhouses atop a ledge of a partial wall that didn't go to the ceiling.



REMEMBER

Allow yourself time to discover objects of desire. Attending weekly auctions may provide great accessories at terrific prices — and they're fun, too! If you, like many decorators, find beauty in unusual, surprising objects and then display them with confidence!



WARNING

Accessories should look as though they belong. A huge faux pas is using fancy accessories in an improper place. An empty crystal decanter (fancy) plunked down on a family room ottoman (casual) looks out of place, even if you've seen it on Pinterest.

Updating Your Arrangements

Relocating your accessories gives them new impact. An overlooked accessory suddenly looks new and exciting. Don't rest on your decorating laurels. Change your accessories seasonally, for a special occasion, or when the spirit moves you. This will lift your own spirit, and your family and friends will look forward to seeing what you do next.



TIP

You don't have to bring out a new group of accessories for a total makeover. Just move a few accessories to different spots in the room, or from one room to another, to give your rooms a fresh look. Things look different in different settings — and so do the settings. When Pat was in charge of visual merchandising for a large furniture store, she changed displays periodically or when an item had been in-store beyond an expected sale date.

Finishing with Pizzazz



TIP

Accessories give a room a finished, professional look. The main difference between an amateur room and a professionally decorated one is the last 10 percent of accessorizing. Try some of these pro accessorizing tips:

» **Accessorize according to your room's style.** Contemporary style calls for a few key accessories. Traditional rooms use lots of accessories. Eclectic rooms can use a few accessories or a lot, depending on your personal style (see Chapter 11).

- » **Group accessories by theme.** “More is better” may be your style, but avoid confusing clutter by grouping similar or thematically related items.
- » **Dramatize and minimize.** “Less is more” when you choose accessories for their drama — distinctive silhouettes, exotic colors, heroic scale, or provocative subject.
- » **Favor a material.** Select accessories by material (such as porcelain, leaded glass, or antique silver), color, or subject (for example, sculptures of animals). The stronger the relationship among the objects, the stronger the personal style statement.
- » **Look through a lens.** Stand in each of the room’s four corners and look through your camera. Is there a blank spot? Add an accessory! Do your groupings look unimportant? Add more accessories to the mix. Is there too much clutter? Reorganize until your camera eye likes what it sees.
- » **Pick a color and run with it.** Take a cue from the most important pattern in your room. Choose its most important color or a lot of a secondary color. Or stick to the accent (surprise) color in the pattern.
- » **Unify and conquer.** Compact groups of accessories create visual impact. Massing blue-and-white vases in assorted sizes, shapes, and decorative motifs attracts attention. Strengthen the sense of a conversation center by placing throw pillows in the same shade on sofas and chairs.

Accessorizing One by One

Just what accessories do you really need? Probably not a lot, but start with accessories that not only look great but also serve a function. Colorful pillows for the sofa look good and feel great. More than merely an ego wall, a handsome collection of your diplomas and awards in your home office tells clients at a glance that third parties consider you an accomplished professional.

Blooming beauty

Nothing is more decorative than flowers — fresh, of course, when they’re available and advisable, but faux is fine. The English way with flowers — straight from the garden and plopped into a big vase — is informal and fun. So is the idea of sticking a few stems into an old teapot, an interesting goblet, or a quaint tin can.



TIP

Once on a photo shoot for a national remodeling magazine, Pat picked up a rusty paint pail from a rubbish heap, filled it with green leaves and roadside tiger lilies, and placed it on a picnic table as a centerpiece. “Whoa . . . pretty sophisticated,” the photographer yelled. Actually, the rusty pail with gray-blue and deep coral paint drips was pretty stunning. It was also handy because they were 25 miles from the nearest florist!

Professional arrangements

Arrangements by florists don’t have to look contrived and formal. Just tell your florist what you’re looking for. You may want to bring your vessel in so they can arrange your flowers just so. Tell the florist where the arrangement will be placed; describe the furniture, the painting or mirror that will hang above it, and the color of your walls.

Silk flowers

Silk flowers can look very real. Beautiful alone, you can mix them with corkscrew vines and branches. They make dramatic focal points. They’re the perfect solution if you travel a lot or want to stay within budget (design your own bouquet and consider that you won’t have to buy fresh flowers weekly!). And when it’s time for a change, just put them on a shelf, and they’ll wait patiently for their next turn. (Put a dust cloth over silk flowers to store them.)



TIP

Save on silk flower arrangements by selecting individual stems and creating your own arrangement. You don’t have to follow a convention; use your own judgment. You can change the look by just exchanging a few blossoms.

Dried plants

Dried flowers and plants have also come into their own now that folks have discovered how to appreciate their soft, faded beauty. You can air-dry plants by hanging them in bunches upside down in a dry, dark room that’s well ventilated; air-drying takes about three weeks. Silica gel products are available in craft shops, and easy-to-follow directions for gathering, drying, and preserving make creating your own dried arrangements and wreaths of wild and cultivated flowers, weeds, and foliage an enjoyable pursuit. This process absorbs the moisture from the plant quickly so it retains its form and bright color. (Check out craft shops for instruction books and supplies.)



TIP

Show off both silk and dried flowers in season. A bouquet of jonquils doesn’t look nearly as convincing in December as it does in the springtime. Mix only flowers that bloom during the same season (no spring irises with fall mums, for example), and keep color schemes synchronized to both reality and your decorating scheme. Nature knows best!

Consider geography when creating your arrangements. Mums in Florida — in or out of season — may not seem credible. But don't be limited to locales. You can make sense of almost anything. In a West Texas ranch house, Pat placed a vase of birds of paradise and tropical flowers beneath an oil painting of a colorful Riviera village. Let your eye be the judge!

Trees and shrubs

Don't forget trees and shrubbery as indoor decoration. Fake (faux) is fine, but fake potted plants in illogical places (like dark hallways) seem silly. Trees, like flowers, need light, so place your fake tree by a window and encourage credibility.

Ceramic tiles

Decorated ceramic tiles are becoming popular as framed wall decor. Some tiles come self-framed; others are framed in wooden moldings. Subjects are often murals of rural scenes, floral bouquets, and Renaissance images made up of several tiles, with and without grout lines showing. Crackled glazes add an aged look. You can also display individual tiles on a small easel, group them for tabletop display, or use them as coasters. (Add felt circles to the bottoms of ceramic tile coasters so they don't scratch your table.)

Ceramics

Ceramics is a general-category name for fired clay decorative objects (such as vases and ashtrays) and functional objects (including dinnerware). Ceramic dinnerware is made from a variety of ceramic or fired-clay materials. Because of distinctive differences in quality and price, it's good to know the names of specific kinds of ceramic materials used for dinnerware and other decorative objects).

China is a word broadly given to all ceramic dinnerware (such as plates and bowls used for dining). This is because of the fine dinnerware made in China of pure, white kaolin clay known as *porcelain*, which found its way to Europe. Kaolin clay (found in Limoges, France) is rare, so Europeans sought and created more readily available and less expensive substitutes. Today, the three major types of ceramic dinnerware are all made from clay but may be described more accurately as:

- » *Bone china*, which adds bone ash to the clay (not kaolin) mixture. Fine bone-china dinnerware (originally made in England), while beautiful, is not as hard as porcelain dinnerware manufactured in Limoges, France (where many factories are located). As a result, it chips more easily. Bone china, while considered fine and suitable for formal tables, also is not as white,

translucent, or thin as porcelain dinnerware (which is increasingly referred to as *Limoges porcelain*).

- » *Earthenware*, sometimes called *pottery*, is made from red clay. It's quite porous and absorbs stains. The finishing glaze that gives it color and pattern is vulnerable to chipping. Earthenware is both inexpensive and popular. It's also rustic and right for Country-style rooms.
- » *Porcelain*, the most expensive ceramic for dinnerware and art objects, is made from fine, pure white, kaolin clay that becomes glasslike when fired in the kiln. Most of the finest porcelain comes from Limoges, France. Porcelain is delicate looking but durable.

Items made of these ceramic materials, along with colored and decorative glassware, are abundant for decorating. If you compiled a complete list of items made of china, you'd be writing for a long, long time. Just a few of the possibilities include vases, ashtrays, small boxes, candy dishes, bowls, plates, sculptures, figurines, umbrella stands, and picture frames.



WARNING

When you buy functional ceramic items — especially glazed and painted pottery and glass — for eating and drinking, make sure they're safe to use and check to see if they're dishwasher safe.



TIP

One great way to display a collection of porcelain (or other ceramic) plates is by hanging them in a decorative arch. Decorative plates are not limited to the dining room — you can hang them in the living room, too.

Collections

Collectors eager to show off their spoils have led the way in using collections of all sorts as decorations. To those mentioned earlier, add old toys, thimbles, dolls, dollhouses, miniature furniture, quilts, samplers, matchbooks, fans, antique evening purses, gelatin or chocolate molds . . . the list of possibilities is endless. And so are the ways for displaying them.

Despite the number of china and curio cabinets and glass-topped display tables available, finding a way to adequately protect your collection while you show it off can present a challenge. Here's where you need ingenuity and perhaps the advice of professionals. Drapery shops can help you solve the problem of how to hang textiles best.

Cabinetmakers can help you create a piece of furniture for displaying three-dimensional objects that are a challenge. Frame shops and catalogs are also excellent sources of ideas for displaying collectibles on the wall. Magazines now run feature articles on displaying collections; watch for and clip these sources of inspiration.

Colored glassware

Colored glassware, popular in Victorian times, adds a great deal of excitement to table settings that use colored goblets and serving pieces. Venetian or Murano glass, blown in exciting color combinations and extraordinary shapes, looks beautiful in Traditional and Contemporary decor. Little wonder that it's more popular than ever — not just for use at the table.

Vintage and antique glassware is highly collectable. Here are the most desired types of glassware:

- » Sandwich glass, made in Sandwich, Massachusetts, in the 1800s, is a collectible.
- » Iridescent glass made by Louis Comfort Tiffany in the late 19th century is very valuable.
- » Distinctive 20th-century green glassware by Anchor Hocking is a recent collectible.
- » Swedish Modern glass is distinctively bold and beautifully colored.



TIP

If colored glass has always held a fascination for you, it's never too early to indulge your passion.

Ego elements

Share your story with others by framing personally important memories. To her astonishment, a young bride discovered her husband's military awards, diplomas, and certificates in a trunk. To his delight, she had them framed. To her delight, he had a very artistic eye and covered the walls of his home office with great-looking groupings of them. More than merely a celebration of self, these framed recognitions are great memories to be enjoyed with others.

Boost your ego by flaunting your accomplishments. If it's personal style you seek, nothing could be more personal. Whether you're decorating your home office, bedroom, or hallway, here are some ideas for reminding the world how great you or someone you love is:

- » Awards and acknowledgements
- » Book covers of your books (or those autographed by famous authors)
- » A check (or dollar bill) from your first big success
- » Diplomas and certifications

- » Letters from famous people, political figures, and celebrities
- » Magazine or news clippings and printouts
- » Military awards
- » Photographs of famous people posing with you
- » Professional licenses
- » Testimonials
- » Wedding license

Be sure to frame paper-type media under glass to protect the document. Shadow boxes can be a nice way to display pieces with more depth than a piece of paper.



TIP

For digital items, an alternative to framing is having the document or photograph printed on canvas. Photo-to-canvas print shops can be found online, and prices start as low as \$4.

Fan favorites

Fans of musicians collect programs, photographs, posters, tickets, and other fascinating objects. Some of these collections have proven to be tremendous investments. You may consider displaying yours because they're fascinating to look at and great conversation pieces. Think of them as accessories, and decide whether they belong in a dressy or casual setting.

Sports memorabilia is a natural for a family room or den where everyone gathers to watch the big game. Treat posters, programs, or a collection of framed ticket stubs as wall art and follow guidelines for arranging (see Chapter 25).

Three-dimensional sports items may include baseball bats, fishing rods (especially custom-made ones), Frisbees, and other small items. Jerseys, pennants, trading cards, and trophies can be displayed with pride. Acquire a nice glass-front cabinet for objects like balls, bats, and gloves. You may need to get creative about finding ways to display them.



REMEMBER

Decorating with sports memorabilia can be classy — yes, you read that right. Some sports memorabilia can be worth tens of thousands of dollars. Even if yours is from your high school team, treat it like it's precious when it comes to presenting it.

Have large-sized items and a tall ceiling? Canoes (hung on rafters in cabins), finishing nets (draped across a wall), and boat paddles (crossed and wall-hung) can be displayed, too.

Found objects

Found objects may be as near as behind the doors of that big cabinet or in some dark closet. Countless times, Pat has said to clients and friends, “What you need on this coffee table is a big, round, bowl.” And they say, “Oh, I’ve got one . . . somewhere.” Check your cabinets and closets for potential decorative objects.

Think outside the box! Consider new ways to use old things. For example, check your attic for old suitcases that you can stack to use as tables, as well as for trunks that can double as coffee tables. Drums — no longer in use as musical instruments — may strike just the right note as end tables in the den. Children’s wooden toys — outgrown and cast aside — may be perfect for the mantel in the den or great room.

Musical instruments can be decorative and still be used. Pat’s California client collected unusual musical instruments from around the world. She arranged them on the corkboard wall behind her TV, where they created a fascinating design and the client could easily remove them for playing!

And don’t forget the barn. Handsome leather saddles that linger after the horse has gone can do double-duty as footstools. Legendary Texan Sam Houston kept his parade saddle on a sawhorse in his bedroom! Old yard and farm tools make unique accessories in Country-style rooms. Want to show off a collection of copper pots but have little or no space? Hang up a chain and use S-hooks to display them.

Beaches and backyards are good sources for interesting objects that cost nothing. Rocks and shells, washed and piled up on a beautiful plastic, glass, or silver tray, can be captivating and fill up a blank spot on that table by the window. Driftwood makes great sculpture. So do birds’ nests (without the birds!). Pat puts nests collected from her yard in a large glass container.

Tree branches and bamboo poles are even showing up in homes as curtain rods. Don’t forget humble objects like pine cones. Pat displays a pine cone collection from various states on a footed silver tray purchased at her local Goodwill store.

Hardware

Add a smashing bit of style with decorative hardware. Metals — wrought iron, antique and hammered bronze, brass, gold, silver, pewter, and aluminum — all have distinct character that lend themselves to certain styles and periods. Select the ones that add to your plan.

If you haven't looked at hardware recently, take a trip to a home improvement store or go online. The number of artistic knobs and pulls will astound you!

You can also turn objects into knobs. Consider creating a few of your own! Experiment with these ideas:

- » **Attach wooden shapes to your cabinet doors.** Children's toys, such as small wagon wheels or ABC blocks, are good for this. Paint them a contrasting color, or stain them to match drawer fronts.
- » **Glue on gorgeous big glass marbles, interesting pebbles (not too big or rough), or chunky beads.** You can find all the fixings at craft stores or discount retailers, or you can pick up marbles at a toy store.
- » **Paint plain ceramic knobs.** Choose the right paint from your local craft shop and paint away.

Mirror magic

Mirrors are decorating magic. They serve as looking glasses, double the view they reflect, and add sparkle. Perhaps best of all, large mirrors make spaces seem larger, a real bonus for a too-small room.

Place a mirror where you want to see your own reflection (an entry hall), reflect an interesting view (opposite a window), create a strong focal point (above a mantel), or light up a dark area (above a hall console or table in a corner). Make sure your mirror reflects something interesting.

Don't overlook the power of a collection of small mirrors to create a fascinating wall display. Hang just mirrors, or mix them with other objects.

Frame-ups

Selecting framed mirrors that echo the shape of other furniture is always a safe bet. In a dining room with round- or shield-back chairs, for example, a round mirror above the mantel is a subtle unifying element.

Mirror frames come in every conceivable furniture style and period — including such favorites as Chippendale, Federal, the Louises, and Contemporary — so matching mirror and furniture style is easy. Don't forget the power of mixing styles. For example, using a large Contemporary mirror to add an eclectic note to a Traditional scheme is perfectly acceptable. (To find out about style, see Chapters 8 and 9.)

You can find many whimsical and creative styles — or whip up your own. A friend of Pat's took two white birch branches, crossed them at the bottom (attaching them with glue and tiny nails), rounded them gently around a round mirror glued onto a plywood circle, crossed them at the top (with some leaves attached), and secured them. The branches made a delightful frame for a mirror in her summer cottage's entry hall.

Frame finishes range from traditional woods and wood tones to gilded bright or antique golds to antique painted and decorated finishes. Match the frame's finish to the level of formality or informality of your furniture. Choose one that contrasts with the wall it's hung against: a dark frame to hang against a light wall, or vice versa. Traditionally, you want the mirror frame to relate to the furniture below it in value (one shouldn't be too much lighter or darker than the other), if not in color. In Contemporary interiors, contrast is key, and eclecticism is perfectly okay.

Frame materials include finished wood, metal, bamboo, and stained glass. Newer, more eccentric designs may be ultra-simple or heavily carved and embellished. Look for details like natural-looking leaves and flowers, as well as jewel stones, bits of marble, and colored glass for added style. The plainer the wall, the more elaborate the frame may be. In an artsy room, the busier both are, the better.

Frame size is also important. Like a work of art, a mirror shouldn't be wider than the furniture below it or less than two-thirds the width. If a mirror is too narrow to adequately fill the wall space, add paintings or sconces on either side. For more drama, hang a mirror vertically above a chest or console. Large mirrors — especially long, vertical ones — can hang alone, without furniture beneath them. Medium-size mirrors look more important if you group them with framed art, porcelain plates, or figurines and hang them above a dresser, chest, or table.

You can group a collection of tiny mirrors — especially those with inventive frames — as you would a collection of paintings (see Chapter 25). We did this in a small, dark hallway, and the mirrors added sparkle and a sense of fun.

Frameless fashion

Modern-style wall-hung mirrors may have no frame at all. Less expensive mirrors without frames, wall-to-wall mirrors, and do-it-yourself mirror tiles and panels can be found with plain or beveled edges. Beveled-edged mirrors are heavier and more substantial looking; they work well in Traditional interiors. Plain-edged mirrors look especially sleek in Contemporary settings. Against a dark wall, you don't notice the absence of a frame.

Clear and colored mirror glass

Clear glass is the norm for framed mirrors in Traditional styles. But more decorative glass includes mysterious, darkened, splotched, antique-looking glass. (The real effect occurs when the mirror backing begins to deteriorate.) A wide variety of colored glasses are available, ranging from steel gray to various metallic colors, including copper and bronze. Another unusual glass is amber, a jewel-stone color. Factor mirror glass color into your scheme.

Clear glass reflects only what's put in front of it, so it's acceptable in almost any setting. Antique glass is a natural with antique or Traditional frames and furniture and can be a striking eclectic accent in a Contemporary room. Colored glass — especially metallic copper and brass, as well as the various grays — requires a greater understanding of color relationships and a deft hand, but it's generally at home in Contemporary situations. Copper glass in an antique copper frame can also take on a Western or Lodge look, while grays framed in driftwood (also gray) can take on a Country or beach house look.

Pillow talk

Throw pillows were originally intended to add comfort and support. Over the years, they've become a major decorating tool because they're an easy source of color and pattern. You can find them covered in every conceivable fabric, color, pattern, and shape, to suit any decor. The more decorative (and expensive) ones are treated with trim that may add a masculine note (with welting, moss, or deep fringe; see Figure 26-1) or a feminine note (with ribbons, fringe, ruffles, or lace).

FIGURE 26-1:
Decorative
pillows with hefty
trims.

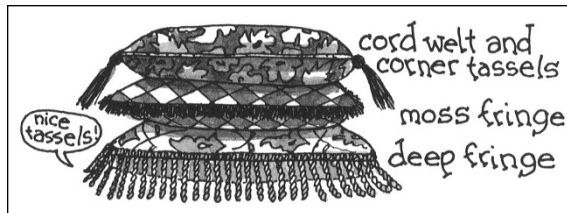


Illustration by Elizabeth Kurtzman

Some throw pillows are reversible — a solid color on one side and a pattern on the other, two different colors, or two different patterns.

For easy cleaning, look for ready-made pillows with removable covers. Stuffing may be down feathers (which need plenty of plumping and sometimes poke through the cover), cotton batting, or hypoallergenic synthetic fiberfill.

The current decorating strategy is to pile several pillows deep on sofas and beds. Just be sure to leave enough room for sitting! Do this by varying sizes and shapes. (Keep extra pillows handy in a basket.)

Alternating patterned and plain pillows of the same size and shape is one easy way to arrange them. Another way is to mix shapes such as triangles, circles, rectangles, and squares, and pick sizes ranging from jumbo to tiny. Experiment — stand rectangle pillows vertically or horizontally, as needed. Giving the top of a too-bulky pillow a quick whack with your hand creates a V-shaped groove that brings the pillow into scale and makes for a more interesting shape. (In the trade, we call this a *Donghia chop*, named for the late designer Angelo Donghia who originated it.)



To successfully mix pillows of various patterns and materials — such as chintz, needlepoint, suede, or embroidery — vary pattern sizes and scales, and stick to a dominant unifying color.

Stained glass

Old stained-glass windows have been favorite decorative accessories for years. If they're in good shape, these old windows can easily be hung from hooks inside an existing window. An architect we know installed one as an interior window between an entry hall and an adjoining family room. Another way to display a stained-glass window is to put it inside a custom-made backlit frame. You can then hang it in any room or space where everyone can admire it.

If the glass in an old window is loose and rattles in the frame, or if the lead channels sag so there's space between the channel and the glass, take the window to a restoration shop for repair before hanging. Hang more than one stained-glass window together, if you like.

Quilts, throws, and warm fuzzies

Collectible textiles in the form of quilts, tapestries, and handcrafted area rugs make impressive wall hangings. They're especially good for use in rooms with cathedral ceilings and in stairwells where large pieces are needed to fill two-story wall spaces. These wall hangings need special consideration:

- » Carefully mount them so the fibers aren't strained.
- » Avoid hanging them in direct sunlight, which fades and weakens the fibers.
- » Trade them out: Switch one for another, to give each a chance to rest. Being an accessory can be a hard job.

Throws, afghans, and giant shawls, kept handy as cover-ups during a quick snooze on the sofa or to snuggle under while you watch TV, are now decorative mainstays. Fortunately, throws and afghans are readily available in a growing variety of fabrics, including wool, synthetics, and woven cotton. Afghans typically are knitted or crocheted, but woven throws come in every conceivable color and pattern and in fabrics as plain as washable cotton and as fancy as cashmere. Shawls are readily available in department stores in *challis wool* (a very soft, finely woven wool) and synthetic fabrics. Antique silk and satin shawls and throws with rich, exotic trims may be more difficult to find, but they're worth the search. Of course, you can make your own silk or satin shawl, complete with fancy fringe.



TIP

Throws are instant decorating at its best. Don't limit the many decorating roles of throws; instead, help yourself to these ideas that make the most of these textile treasures:

- » **Be handy.** Stack several colorful throws in a handsome basket and set it beside the hearth or near a favorite easy chair.
- » **Coordinate.** If your sofa is dull and colorless, drape a beautifully colored or patterned throw across one end. At the other end, add throw pillows in the same colors.
- » **Cover up.** Cover a round table or fling a large, fringed shawl over your grand piano to give it glam, just like in old movies.
- » **Disguise.** Hide the wear and tear on your footstool or ottoman by folding a throw and laying it across the top.
- » **Drape it.** Create an instant valance by draping a throw over the top of the window. Secure it with high-style holdbacks found in drapery shops.
- » **Hang it.** Brighten a boring wall by hanging a colorful throw on a low wooden curtain pole and brackets.
- » **Reduce.** Lessen the impact of a big, boring recliner by draping a throw across one side.
- » **Slipcover.** Redo a small chair the easy way: Toss an eye-catching throw over it, and tuck the throw around the pillows. Secure the throw around the chair base with a rope or ribbon.
- » **Spread cheer.** In the bedroom, cover a rectangular table with a throw to serve as a dressing table or desk, or drape one across the end of your bed as a mini-spread.

Screen tests

Movable screens have been around for about 3,000 years, and designers haven't tired of them yet! They were probably invented for practical reasons — to conceal things, shield a door, serve as a dressing screen, create a wall, or block an unattractive view — but they're also very decorative. A screen makes a romantic backdrop for a sofa, introduces a sense of architecture (height and depth), holds pinned-up snapshots, and provides gorgeous color, texture, and pattern that can be a room's focal point.

Carved (pierced) screens only partially conceal light. Screens with *transoms* (see-through tops) provide privacy but look lighter than solid screens. Small, decorative, oriental screens are often mounted on the wall, like art, above a sofa, a chest, or the headboard in a bedroom.

Select a screen that is compatible with your furniture style and the mood of your room. An undulating screen with a sculptural Contemporary look, for example, doesn't mix well with Traditional furniture.

Screens intended for practical use are usually at least 6 feet high and have at least three 2-foot-wide panels. A screen that's 8 feet high is more dramatic but can be intimidating. A screen of four or more panels provides better coverage if you're using it as a dressing screen. Keep screens light enough to be easily moved, preferably by one person.

Check the hinges; they should be heavy-duty and double-action to allow the screen to bend in two directions for greatest flexibility. If your favorite screen style has feet, they should be sturdy and stable.

Why not make your own screen? Follow these suggestions, and feel free to send us photos of your completed masterpieces:

- » Using two-way hinges, connect three or more doors — old, new, solid wood, or hollow core. Paint, stain, or faux-finish the doors to suit your decorating needs.
- » Hinge together shutters, whether old and paint-chipped or new and ready to finish. Choose tall ones for tall-standing screens that provide privacy and shorter ones when privacy isn't the goal.
- » Join framed mirrors to work as screens. Finish off the unfinished side with paint, paper, or fabric. Double your pleasure by facing the mirror toward the scene you want to reflect.
- » Connect (old or new) iron gates for a see-through screen that provides a beautiful pattern.



TIP

What are some unorthodox ways in which you can use a decorative screen? Try these suggestions to get your own creative juices flowing:

- » **Add architectural interest.** Transform a plain square room into an octagon by placing standing screens in the four corners. The screens direct the eye to the center of the room — hang an interesting chandelier to create a focal point. Neither screens nor the chandelier need to be expensive — it's the idea that counts.
- » **Create a privacy wall.** Do guests camp out on your sofa? Give this area privacy by using a series of standing screens. They're quick and easy to put in place or to move aside.
- » **Make a headboard.** A raised- or recessed-panel or single-plane solid wood door, or an inexpensive hollow-core door, can be transformed into a screen/headboard that makes a statement. Stained in a dark color, a paneled door seems more masculine. Painted in a beautiful jewel or pastel color, your paneled screen/headboard seems more feminine. Paint a single plane, undecorated door a rich neutral for a modern headboard. Stencil any type of door for a screen/headboard with a Country look. Add decorative moldings to give your creation French style.
- » **Block a view.** Pat's client had her six grandchildren drip-paint hollow-core doors that were hinged together to create a standing screen. The screen hid an unsightly window and became the backdrop for a sofa — and an unforgettable family memory.

8

The Part of Tens

IN THIS PART . . .

Level up your decor by swapping out builder-grade elements for custom ones.

Play with visual cues to make small areas look big.

- » Creating the look of luxury with minimal effort
- » Making your builder-grade room look like a palace
- » Using black doors and touches to make a statement

Chapter 27

Ten Tips for a Luxe Look

Call it whatever you like: high end or luxe (short for luxury). What you really want is for your interiors to look as though you're putting your best foot forward. This is especially true of public rooms (like living rooms) and entertaining spaces (like kitchens), where family and friends show up for important events. You may also want to add luxury touches to private spaces (like your bedroom or bathroom), where you go to rest and regroup.

Here are our top ten tips for making the most of your precious money and time to get the look you want. Some may be just right for your decorating project. Some (or all) may be springboards for your own ideas.

Ramp Up Molding

Builders cut costs by using inexpensive, plain, small-scale trim (which includes molding). Sometimes builders cut trim all together. You can add instant luxury by upscaling with custom-looking molding. Beautifully designed and scaled crown ceiling molding looks impressive. Suitably wide baseboard trim can discreetly incorporate electrical outlets. Impressive trim around doors and windows are eye candy that add elegance to interiors.



REMEMBER

Do your homework before buying trim. Look at manufacturers' websites and check your local lumber showrooms. You'll be amazed at the variety of historic and contemporary trims in wood and synthetic materials. Work with a trusted source (perhaps your carpenter) to select the trim (or more often, the *combination* of trims) that works best in your home. If you like do-it-yourself projects, you'll find adding trim a relatively easy task.



TIP

What color should you paint the trim? Generally, trim is painted a high-gloss white in Traditional-style rooms. In Traditional and Contemporary rooms, an updated approach is to paint trim a high-gloss version of the wall's color. Another Contemporary approach calls for high-contrast color that suits your scheme — no matter the interior style.

Cut Back on Clutter

Clutter isn't classy! Not only is it inelegant, but clutter taxes your attention, causing mental fatigue. If nothing else, clutter kills the luxe decorating message. In this case, less is definitely more.



TIP

Get your focus back — edit out all but the truly necessary furnishings. If that means tossing favorite bric-a-brac, relegate it to the attic for safe storage. Count on a select number of well-chosen pieces of furniture and accessories to make the case for richness. Designers call this “the curated look.”

Float Your Furniture

A sofa plastered to the wall has a stifled look. Give it some air — move your sofa into the room. Place a coffee table in front, add chairs to either side, and you create a circle that invites conversation. If you move your L-shaped sofa away from the wall and closer to the television, be sure to leave a walk-through space. You'll need space behind that sofa so traffic can actually navigate around it. Leave space for a pathway through the room, avoiding disturbing the conversation and TV viewing area. With a newly comfortable and inviting seating area, a once-static room can come alive! Floating your bed can work in large spaces, especially if you have a great headboard or a round bed.

Go for the Gold and Brass

Gold metallics look rich. So does brass, which is back in style in hardware, accessories, and fixtures in baths and kitchens. You can add some gold-leaf wax to molding for extra luxury. Add gold-framed art, a handsome mirror in a gold frame (the more lavish, the more luxe looking), gold statuettes on the mantel, and gold bookends to support books with gold covers.

Think gold covers are a wild idea? Not at all — just wrap impressive-sized books in gold giftwrap. Above a handsome chest or sideboard, group gorgeous plates with lots of gold embellishment. Use accessories to bring the look home! A small gold vase on an end table echoes the gold frames of three paintings hanging above a nearby chest. The effect of one small touch of gold is surprisingly powerful. Adding some brass in lieu of gold can add a rich metallic look. Swap out faucets, door handles, and lighting fashioned from brass from an instantly luxe look.

Heighten the Hardware

Swap out builder's hardware for knock-out knobs, precious pulls, and handsome exposed hinges for cabinetry in dining rooms, kitchens, and baths. Adding jewel-like knobs to a plain dresser gives it a richer, attention-grabbing presence. Often, only a few of these expensive pieces are needed, so you won't break your decorating bank.



TIP

If you expect to move, keep the original hardware so you can replace and take your luxe-look pieces with you.

Lay Down Some Rugs

Oriental rugs add a look of wealth, and there's a style for every room, every period, and every person! Yes, they're pricey, but they last several lifetimes, which makes them a great investment. Occasionally, you may spot one at a thrift store. Oriental rugs can work with many different kinds of interiors and color schemes. If you happen across a beautiful Oriental rug, snatch it up no matter the color — you've found a treasure.

Paint It Black

Every room can get a dramatic look with a touch of black. Black is a serious color that adds *ballast* (weight) to flighty interiors. It doesn't take much black to make a statement. Perhaps just painting an old chest or drop-leaf table will do. In a Contemporary room, a group of mismatched picture frames painted black will add posh impact. Don't be afraid to spray-paint furniture black to make it work better in an interior.



TIP

Paint your interior doors black for rich drama! While you're at it, painting the exterior of your entry door black adds not only curb appeal but \$6,000 to your home's value, according to real estate analysts.

Plus Up Your Style

Professional designers think in pairs — a pair of identical chairs, two tall chests, dueling sofas, standing screens to flank a fireplace, matching framed mirrors, and so on. More is sometimes more in terms of style. In addition to using pairs of matching furniture, small changes such as using coordinated throws and more luxurious accessories can add a lot of impact. Think of switching out the frames to make family photographs look stately. Accessories can be swapped seasonally for a change of pace.

Switch Out the Switch Plates

Got builder-grade switch plates? Those cheap white or cream plastic light-switch plates do *not* say luxe. Switch them out for high style. Switch plates can vary in price, starting for as little as \$5 or \$10. Smart switch plates that sync to your smartphone to control lighting effects can be anywhere from \$50 to \$200 or more. (Some companies even offer financing!)

Use mirror switch plates for glamorous bathrooms. In Traditional and period-style rooms, paperhangers often cover plastic switch plates with the wallpaper used on the wall, careful to match the pattern (a great idea for making switch plates disappear).

When you start searching for switch plates online, you'll be amazed at the variety of styles. Some do-it-yourselfers spray-paint their plastic plates with a metallic or other color (you may need a few protective clear coatings to counteract wear and tear.) The cost for this switch from eyesore to elegance is minimal, but the effect is priceless.

Upscale Your Lighting Fixtures

Chandeliers — which never really went away — are back, adding tremendous verve, in every style. Replace standard fixtures with standout fixtures for your own viewing pleasure. And although you may not be decorating with resale in mind, they do add recoupable value. You can view an infinite variety of fixtures online, in catalogs, and in stores. You'll be amazed at the many materials, shapes, sizes, and functions waiting for your selection. Table lamps make definite decorative statements, and they, too, come in an infinite number of styles.



REMEMBER

Select cool-color metals (like silver, nickel, and platinum) for cool-color rooms; warm-color metals (like gold, bronze, and brass) for warm-color rooms.

Don't forget that shades don't need to be white. Check out shades in colors, patterns, textures, shapes, sizes, and more. Shades can range in price, but they're well worth the cost. Keep all those elements in line with your overall scheme.

- » Creating cohesion with color
- » Fooling the eye with proportions
- » Zoning areas of function with rugs

Chapter 28

Ten Tips for Small Spaces

Got space? If your space is small, you can still make that space function like it's big and feel like it's comfortably (relatively) large. Bottom line: Small spaces can look and work large if you think outside that too-small box. Here are ten tips proven to make your cozy space seem spacious.

Build in Shelving

Add shelving in unexpected places to get more storage and display area. In the bedroom, trade the painting above the dresser for floating shelves to hold perfume bottles and decorative objects. For use throughout the house, ready-made shelves and brackets are plentiful in different styles, colors, and sizes. Arrange them as you like — symmetrically or asymmetrically. Add a shelf above a window for objects — whether decorative (like vases and statuettes) or functional (like platters). Some historic houses have shelves that run near the ceiling around the entire room. Shelves can also be like built-in bookcases to house collections of favorite stuff.

Create Cohesion with Color

Color can unify a space to make it seem bigger than it is. A one-color scheme makes a cohesive statement. You can build in visual variety by using tints and tones of the same shade. All-white rooms, according to legend, look larger than

they really are. Plus, they never go out of style. Use a lot of texture to keep the eye's interest. On the opposite end of the spectrum, dark colors can add cohesion to an architecturally disjointed space. One great example is an author who painted the walls and ceiling of a small, windowless attic home office black and used tall black bookcases. This color scheme visually eliminated distracting lines, aiding concentration. With deep-toned rooms, you'll need to amp up the lighting to make it all work.



TIP

Small-space color schemes work best with a limited palette of up to three colors. Colors can be warm (advancing) or cool (receding). How do you pick? Actually, a small room can be a warm or cool color. One tip that helps: Choose a tint (lighter) of the hue if you want to open up the room visually. If the room opens into an adjoining room and you want to create variety, use the same hue as the larger room but in a darker tone for the smaller space.

Fool the Eye with Curtains

Alter the feeling of small, low-ceiling room with floor-length curtains hung a few inches from the ceiling. Curtains can also shield uncomfortable light and unsightly sights, including poor architecture. Mismatched windows can make a small room seem even smaller. Windows can also interfere with furniture placement in a tiny space.



TIP

One simple solution: Curtain off the entire wall to form a lovely backdrop for the sofa. Plan out the separate curtain panels so they can be opened for each window as desired. Another solution: For small spaces with mismatched windows, you can use different styles of curtains to fit the window but use the same fabric or material on all the windows, whether they're large, small, or somewhere in between.

Get into the Zone with Area Rugs

Area rugs chop up floor space making it seem smaller, so use them with discretion when creating zones or islands in open floor plans in small homes. For a cohesive look, choose identical or coordinating area rugs for wall-less rooms. Vary rug sizes depending on the function of an area. You can use area rugs in a small, open-plan home to unify the look of dark floors. Pick a runner to create the feeling of an entry hall. Place a small rug under a coffee table to create a cozy space. Use a rug under the dining table to warm up the space. Don't be afraid to layer rugs, either. Some rugs work well over wall-to-wall carpeting. Some global styles rely on piling rugs atop each other to create a look.

Light Up the Smart Way

Lighting for small multifunctional rooms should be smart, beautiful, and flexible. Be sure you can adjust the lumens to create the right lighting for the right situation. If the ceiling is low, forgo chandeliers and ceiling fans along with heavy lamps with bulky bases. (Relocate view-interrupting light fixtures to unexpected places; a chandelier might just add pizzazz in a compact kitchen that shows from the entry.) Go for wall-hung lighting when there are few tables for lamps. Consider having recessed lighting installed. If the ceiling is high, hang a chandelier that draws the eye upward! In any small space, wall-hung lamps and slender floor lamps will save valuable floor space. To save space on bedside tables, hang pendant lamps or install swing-arm wall-hung lamps for those who like to read in bed.

Magnify the Magic with Mirrors

Mirrors are always magic — framed, frameless, floor-to-ceiling, and wall-to-wall, they transform a space. In all spaces, mirrors should reflect an attractive view. In a small living room where a sofa is the first thing you see when entering the room, hang a large, framed mirror horizontally above the sofa. The frame shouldn't be massive or bulky.

For too-small spaces, in addition to mirrors, consider mirrored furniture. Mirrored furniture — like chests, end tables, and headboards — encourages the eye to travel. Wall cabinets with mirrored fronts will reflect light and surroundings in a lively way. Mirrored closet doors are space expanders for bedrooms (and aid in getting dressed). French doors with mirrored panes enlarge a space and provide privacy. (Mirror them only partway, leaving a row of clear panes to admit light.) Door-hung mirrors are inexpensive and can be wall-hung in groups. Paint the frames the same color as the wall or a contrasting color — or leave them as you bought them.

Make Space with Standing Screens

Don't want a wall, but need privacy or an attractive backdrop for those Zoom calls? Standing screens are just the ticket. Instantly available when needed, they fold aside or completely away. Screens come in all styles and materials. They also add interest in places with blank walls. You can also make them by hinging together hollow-core doors. Screens are so popular that there are online companies that only sell standing screens.

Scale Up Furniture Size

It sounds counterintuitive, but big pieces of furniture can make a small room feel more spacious than lots of small-scale pieces. Scaled-up furniture can also add drama. Cutting out little space-gobbling pieces will free up floor space, too. Repurpose big pieces for storage. (Thrift stores are full of old-school furniture perfect for retrofitting.) Armoires hold linens. China cabinets can find a new home in a home office. Consider painting old furniture all the same color or a similar color to the wall to minimize the impact visually.

Select Multifunctional Pieces

Make the most of a small space by selecting furniture that does double duty. Find a floor lamp with a built-in table. Opt for ottomans with hidden storage. Choose upholstered chairs and chairs-and-a-half that can double as pull-out sleepers. Pick coffee tables with shelves and glass tops to display objects. Go for expandable dining or coffee tables for special event entertaining. Select sectional sofas for small living rooms and dainty dens.



WARNING

Be mindful of the direction of the *return* (the L-shaped extension that may also have an arm running about halfway down to a bumper or attached ottoman), because it may not work in your next house.

Take Advantage of Vertical Space

When floor space is limited, put walls to work. Wall-hung cabinets are readily available, and most often, they're less expensive than built-ins. Mirrored bathroom cabinets add glamorous space-expanding storage. Use coat hooks instead of standing coat racks in mudrooms and entry areas. Consider attaching narrow bookcases to the wall, raising them off the floor, and leaving clear space beneath for a spacious feeling. Some historic houses have pegs attached to the wall for hanging chairs not in use, but that might be a step too far today!

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About the Authors

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Patricia Hart McMillan: Patricia, an interior design consultant, is the author of 24 books on decorating and architecture. In addition to writing classics on interiors, she has designed interiors for private clients, designer showcases, and corporations, as well as created home accessories and furnishing lines. Her work has appeared in decorating magazines, the *New York Times*, and *USA Today*. She served as editor-in-chief of two publications and director of a New York City-based public relations firm representing prestigious international home furnishings manufacturers. She holds a bachelor of arts in English, with a minor in art history from the State University of New York (New Paltz) and a design certificate from the New York School of Interior Design. Friend her on Facebook at www.facebook.com/patricia.h.mcmillan.

Dedication

To those living their best life by design: May this book be the beginning of your amazing journey to a perfect home.

—Katharine Kaye McMillan

To all my designer friends, who work to make the world a more beautiful place.

—Patricia Hart McMillan

Authors' Acknowledgments

Since the late-90s, this reference for the rest of us has been read by thousands of people whose passion is decorating. We're proud to have been asked to create this updated third edition because so much has changed in the way we live and how we decorate. We want to thank all the professionals, designers, and experts who helped make *Home Decorating For Dummies* a mini-masterclass in do-it-yourself design.

We are indebted those who graciously provided photography. Multimedia design authority Joe Ruggiero (<https://joeruggiero.com>) sent wonderful photography of classic interiors. Interior designer and furniture/accessories creator John Lyle (www.johnlyledesign.com) shared breathtaking pictures of his iconic designs. Marilyn Trainor Foresman, a design blogger and interior designer (www.msdesignmaven.com), offered up breathtaking photography. Architect Mark Candelaria (www.candelariadesign.com) supplied stunning photography.

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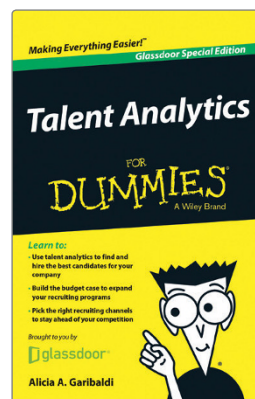
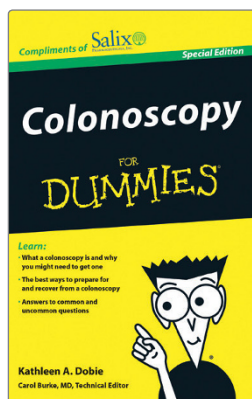
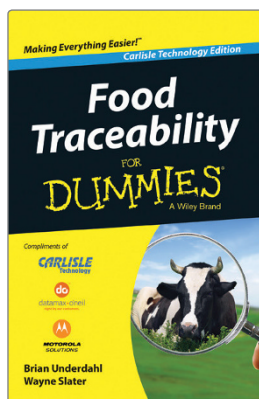
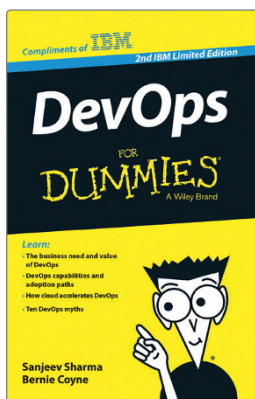
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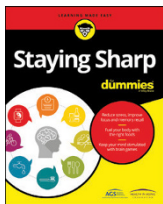
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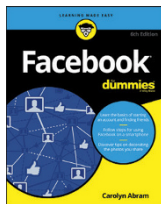
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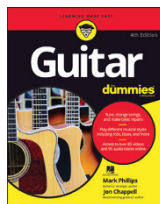
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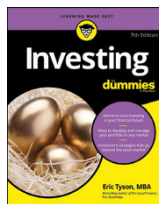
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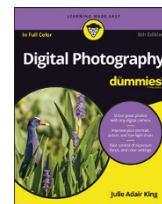
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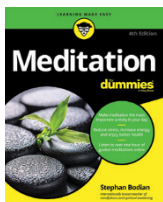
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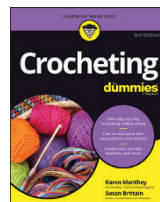
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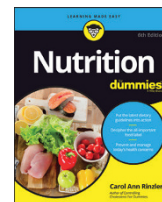
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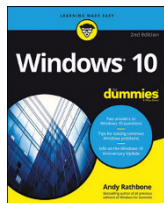


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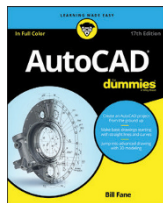


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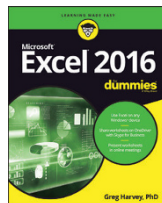
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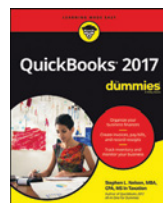
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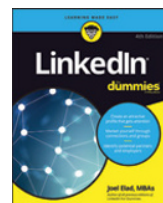
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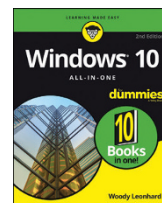
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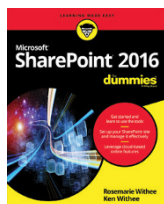
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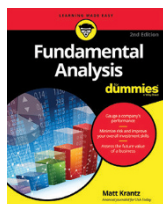
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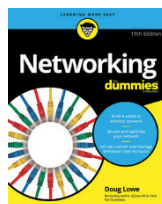
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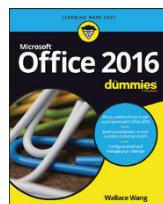
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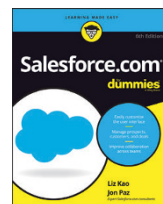
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PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF JOHN LYLE (WWW.JOHNLYLEDESIGN.COM); PHOTOGRAPH BY MARK ROSKAMS

Forget “less is more.” The entry hall at Designer John Lyle’s country house proudly proclaims that more is more — and much better!



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF MARK CANDELARIA, AIA (WWW.CANDELARIADESIGN.COM); PHOTOGRAPH BY DINO TOWN

Personal style can be expressed by the way you hang your art — as single pieces, stacked, or in groups.

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White plus one strong contrasting color creates dramatic impact with any furniture style.

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF THE JOE RUGGIERO COLLECTION (WWW.JOERUGGIERO.COM)



Pattern delights the eye and keeps it moving. The coffee table, the focal point, is a place of rest.



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF THE JOE RUGGIERO COLLECTION (WWW.JOERUGGIERO.COM)

Layer area rugs atop hardwood flooring for maximum textural interest.



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF MARK CANDEARIA, AIA (WWW.CANDEARIADESIGN.COM); PHOTOGRAPH BY DINO TONNI

A monotone color scheme keeps busy lines on a leash in this romantic kitchen with mirrored doors.

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF MARK CANDELARIA, AIA (WWW.CANDELARIADESIGN.COM); PHOTOGRAPH BY DINO TONNI



Color—have it *your* way. A deep warm color creates a mood that is pure magic in this Southwest bunkhouse living room.

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF DESIGNER LEIGH WILLIAMS



The same rich color tones unite the Contemporary style chair and the classically patterned flatweave rug in the home office of the designer.



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF SHERWIN-WILLIAMS

The vibrant color of the wall in this bath is accentuated by a fresh, crisp-white baseboard.



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF INTERIOR DESIGNER PATRICIA HART McWILLIAM

Repeating the metallic gold finish in accessories throughout the room creates both diversity and unity.



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF MS DESIGN MAVEN (WWW.MSDESIGNMAVEN.COM)

Designer Marilyn Trainor Storey updated an old-but-good chair by painting the legs green and then covering it with Grassy Fields, a fabric of her own design.

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF MARK CADELARIA, AIA (WWW.CADELARIADESIGN.COM); PHOTOGRAPH BY DINO TONIN



The well-designed room is multifunctional. This room is graciously a study, library, and media room.

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF INTERIOR DESIGNER PATRICIA HART McMILLAN



A *portiere* (a curtain on an expansion rod) is a quick, easy, inexpensive way to create privacy.

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF MARK CADELARIA, AIA (WWW.CADELARIADESIGN.COM); PHOTOGRAPH BY DINO TONIN



A coffered ceiling is infinitely interesting.



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF DINO TOWN (WWW.DINOTOWNPHOTOGRAPHY.COM)

A wall of glass block admits light and adds glamorous pattern and texture to a city living room.



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF THE JOE RUGGIERO COLLECTION (WWW.JOERUGGIERO.COM)

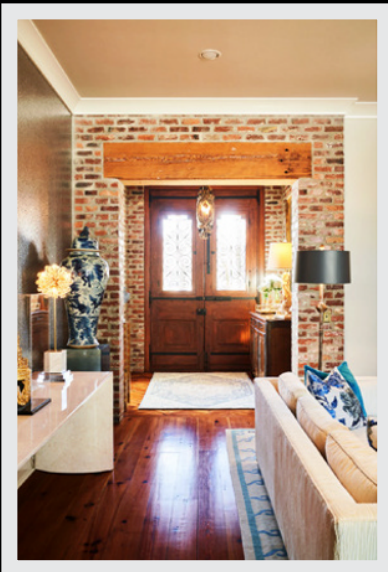
Floor covering for a beach house — woven sisal, naturally.

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF MARK CANDELARIA, AIA
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A classic furniture arrangement — a sofa flanked by comfortable chairs — is both elegant and inviting.

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF DESIGNER JOHN LYLE (WWW.JOHNLYLEDISIGN.COM);
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PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF DESIGNER JOHN LYLE
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Floating the sofa — moving it away from the wall — leaves a traffic path behind the sofa and away from the conversation area.

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